THE
RUSSO-INDIAN QUESTION



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HISTORICALLY, STRATEGICALLY, AND POLITICALLY CONSIDERED

WITH A SKETCH OF CENTRAL ASIATIC POLITICS

AND

MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA

BY

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PREFACE.

THE RUSSO-INDIAN, or Central Asian, question has for several obvious reasons been attracting much public attention in England, in Russia, and also on the Continent, within the last year or two.

A great deal of disjointed information is available for reference on the subject, but it is for the most part buried in books of travel, histories, reviews, pamphlets, magazines, journals of learned societies, Russian newspapers, blue books, Government reports, and other publications which the general public, who may wish for information upon the subject, have neither inclination, leisure, nor opportunity to consult. I have on this account thought that the present volume, giving a short sketch of the history of this question from its earliest origin, and condensing much of the most recent and interesting information on the subject, and on its collateral phases, might perhaps be acceptable to those who take an interest in it.

As regards myself, I cannot claim to have had access to any very exceptional sources of information on this topic, or to any peculiar qualifications that should embolden me to write upon it. I can only say, that having been quartered for four or five years in the Punjab, two of which were spent in the close neighbourhood of the frontier of Affghan-

istan, I naturally took a deep interest in any events that occurred in Central Asia, and also in the state of the countries and the peoples immediately beyond our boundary; the more so, perhaps, as I thought it probable that my regiment might some day be called upon to take a share in some of the fights that almost annually take place with the numerous unruly border tribes.

The Russo-Indian question has, as is well known, always given rise to much controversy; and the most opposite views are still maintained by the alarmists and quietists upon it. It has been my object to state these opinions as moderately and as reasonably as possible, and to represent fairly the aspect of the question as maintained by either side. Whether I have succeeded in doing so must be for others to judge.

In conclusion, I have to express my acknowledgments to the many able men of whose labours and writings I have so largely availed myself. The particular sources from which my information has been drawn will be found mentioned in foot-notes in each case where an article or a book has been made use of, or quoted, throughout the volume. My thanks are also due to several of the officials of the India Office, who courteously allowed me to consult sundry books and official papers not easily procurable elsewhere; to Mr. R. Michell, the well-known Russian translator; and also to Colonel Cooke and Captain Barrington, both of the Topographical Department of the War Office, who most kindly allowed me to make extracts from the Russian official journals filed in their office.

CAVALRY BARRACKS, CANTERBURY:
June 21, 1869.

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CHAPTER I.

'RUSSOPHOBIA'—ITS ORIGIN, GROWTH, AND PROGRESS DOWN TO THE PRESENT DAY.

LONG BEFORE the period that Russia, first emerging from political chaos and barbarism, began to take any prominent part on the great theatre of European politics, the idea of founding a vast Eastern empire held a foremost place among the various schemes that her rulers had conceived for their self-aggrandisement. Though before the end of the seventeenth century her nominal conquests had reached the far eastern extremities of Asia, yet the explorations and encroachments of her early freebooters and adventurers were confined to the northern portion of the Continent.* Peter the Great, following up the policy and projects of his predecessors, was not slow to grasp this idea in all its bearings, nor to perceive how the geographical position of his rising empire, with Asia stretching to a boundless extent eastwards, favoured the development of such a scheme; and he may be said to be the first ruler of Russia who advanced his

* For a history of the explorations of Poyarkoff, Khabaroff, and other early Russian freebooters on the Amoor, see 'The Russians on the Amoor,' also 'Report of Mr. Lumley on the Tea Trade of Russia,' p. 93 *et seq.*

frontiers towards the more central portion of the Continent, and who by ceaseless encroachment upon his neighbours smoothed the way towards the attainment of his country's traditional aims. With this view he entered into a treaty with the Affghans, which had for its object the overthrow of Persia. For the space of more than a century and a half since then, throughout the reigns of emperors and empresses of varying shades of character, Russia has never ceased constantly to advance her frontiers eastwards. Her efforts during this period have been unceasing to penetrate into Persia and the countries of Central Asia, and to render them, by force or diplomacy, subordinate to her wishes and control; with the object, as has since the beginning of the present century been constantly maintained by many, of ultimately pursuing her victorious path to India. Her rivalry with England, it may be added, has been of two kinds, viz., political and commercial; the latter, it need hardly be said, being always subordinated to the former.

Circumstances from time to time may have compelled this policy to remain in abeyance, yet the spirit of encroachment has only slumbered for a while, and with fresh opportunities the insatiate thirst of conquest has ever re-appeared. But however much Russia during the eighteenth century may have looked, as is maintained, with an envying and covetous eye towards the British possessions in India, and however greedily she may have annexed province after province eastward, with the view of ultimately turning Indian trade and commerce into channels which would be profitable to herself, she was during that period too much busied with her own more immediate concerns to make her presence as an Asiatico-European Power felt as far as India, from which she was separated by so immense a distance. It was not till the commencement of the present century that, owing to the course of political events in Europe, the idea of English

supremacy in India being threatened by Russian invasion was first seriously entertained. Russophobia, as regards India, may be said to date its birth from the year 1800. For nearly three-fourths of a century since then, the present and future aspect of this Russo-Indian question has been productive of endless argument and discussion, and has led to no small difference of opinion, both among military and political writers. Owing to the near approach of the Russian frontier to that of India, and the development of new aspects of the question, consequent upon each fresh advance on her part, the subject has been, and still promises to be, inexhaustible; and it will be well in the following historical sketch to mark the different phases through which this feeling of Russophobia has passed.

In the year 1800, during the short-lived alliance between the Emperor Paul and Napoleon, while both were equally concerned in assailing the power of England, the latter, while yet First Consul, proposed the project of a joint Russian and French invasion of India. As regards the projected plan of operations, 'it was agreed that 35,000 French, under Massena, should proceed to Ulm, and descend the Danube to the Black Sea, from whence a Russian fleet was to transport it to Taganrok; that it was then to move to the Volga, where it would find boats to convey it to Astracan, at which point it was to be joined by 35,000 Russians and 50,000 Cossacks, amply provided with artillery and horses; and that the combined armies should then be transported by the Caspian Sea from Astracan to Astrabad, where magazines of all sorts should be established for its use. The march from the frontiers of France to Astrabad was estimated at eighty days, and fifty more were considered requisite to bring the army to the banks of the Indus by the route of Herat, Furrah, and Candahar.'* It is hardly necessary to remark that such

* Bell's 'History of Russia,' vol. iii. p. 244.

a scheme as this, difficult enough at the present day, would at that time have been utterly impracticable, and even if such a genius as Napoleon deemed it feasible, as it has been alleged he did, such an opinion on his part can only be attributed to the very crude ideas of the extent and geography of the countries of Western and Central Asia then prevalent in Europe.*

Though subsequent events arrested the attempt to carry this project into effect, yet the idea was revived some years later by Napoleon. In 1807 he proposed to the Emperor Alexander at Tilsit an invasion of India by a confederate army, which should unite on the plains of Persia. With this view the French Emperor opened negotiations with the Shah of Persia, to induce him to join in the

* The author of a most ably written and interesting article in the 'Quarterly Review' for October 1866, entitled, 'The Russians in Central Asia,' p. 563, says in a note, with reference to this subject:— 'The project of a joint invasion by a French and Russian army is well known to have been submitted by Napoleon to Alexander at Tilsit, in 1807, when it was hoped that Persia, under the inspiration of Lucien's counsels, who was to be sent on a special mission to the Shah, would have also joined in the scheme. But a similar proposal of an earlier date is not so well known, and has, in fact, as we think, been first brought to notice in this country in Mr. Michell's work. "While yet First Consul," it is said in Mr. Michell's Khiva volume, "Napoleon I., in 1800, proposed to the Emperor Paul the plan of a combined French and Russian campaign to India; and as at that time a rupture had broken out between England and Russia, the despatch of Don Cossacks to India was agreed on; and the Cossack Hetman, or commander-in-chief, Count Orloff-Denisof, received orders to march on India with all the Don regiments. The rescript of the Emperor Paul I. relating to this is inserted in the appendix of General Milutin's work on Suwarrow's campaigns in 1779, published at St. Petersburg in 1853."' The author of the said article had apparently not seen Bell's 'History of Russia,' (written more than twenty years ago), from which I have extracted verbatim the above passage concerning the details of the proposed expedition in 1800. It is to be wished, however, that Mr. Bell had given some clue to the source whence he derived his information.

scheme, and intended to send his brother, Lucien Bonaparte, to arrange the details of the proposed campaign. In fact, it was no secret that the two emperors intended in the course of the ensuing spring to undertake an expedition against the British possessions in the East. In consequence, however, of the political events which not long afterwards brought France and Russia into direct collision, the project a second time collapsed. The unscrupulous ambition of Napoleon soon induced England and Russia, from feelings of mutual self-interest, to re-establish friendly relations, and thus all danger to India vanished for the time. The general peace of 1815 followed, and England, anxious to busy herself with internal reforms, and her own more immediate concerns, for the subsequent ten or twelve years banished the phantom of Russian aggression from her thoughts, as being far too distant a contingency for any real apprehension. Russia, in the meantime, though apparently quiescent, was not idle. In the year 1814, a humiliating treaty called the treaty of Goolistan, brought about, strange to say, by British intervention, was dictated to Persia by Russia. The former State only purchased peace by ceding to Russia, in addition to other districts, all her territories south of the Caucasus, and also engaged never to maintain any naval force on the Caspian.

From the date of the treaty of Goolistan up to the year 1826, there was no fresh outbreak of actual hostilities between Persia and Russia. The peace, however, was only surface deep, and not likely to be of long duration. According to Kaye, the historian of the Affghan war, 'the irritation of a disputed boundary had ever since the ratification of the treaty of Goolistan kept the two States in a restless unsettled condition of undisguised animosity,'* and in the year 1826 this feeling found utterance in acts of mutual

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 147.

defiance. It is hard to say which side struck the first unpardonable blow. The attitude of Russia had been long that of overbearing insolence and menace, and was probably designed to provoke her weaker neighbour. Urged on, and even threatened, by the religious zeal and fanaticism of his moollahs, the Shah Futteh Ali was forced (sorely against his will, it is said) to declare war against Russia, and the Persians entered upon the campaign with the ardour and fanatical zeal of men burning to avenge the many insults that had been heaped upon them by the hated infidels. Their arms, owing to the Russians being taken by surprise by the suddenness of the attack made upon them, were at first crowned with success, which was, however, not destined to last long. In September 1826, the Russian General Paskievitch defeated them in a pitched battle with a loss of 1,200 men.

The war was resumed in the spring of 1827, and in the course of the campaign which ensued, the Russians took Erivan and Tabreez. In the autumn of the same year, the Persians, defeated, enfeebled, and dispirited, were glad to sue for peace, and avail themselves of the friendly intervention of Great Britain, which was proffered for that object, and Russia was again enabled to rectify her frontier at the expense of her humbled foe. In accordance with the provisions of this treaty, called the treaty of Turkomanchai, the districts of Erivan, and Nachchivan were ceded to Russia, who thus advanced her frontier farther eastwards, and the Shah, in addition to many other concessions, consented to recognise the frontier line dictated by the Russian Government. Strange and incomprehensible as it may appear, the British Government was again so blinded to its own ulterior interests, that it not only did not prevent, but actually smoothed the way to the ratification of this treaty, which bound Persia hand and foot to the Court of

St. Petersburg, and advanced the Russian frontier nearer to India; and this too in the face of the fact that England was pledged by a clause in the treaty of Teheran, concluded in 1812, in case of a war between Persia and any European State, either to send an army from India to her assistance, or to grant the Shah an annual subsidy during the continuance of such war. This clause, however, in the above treaty, which had been concluded without any due calculation of the embarrassments in which, sooner or later, it would involve us with Russia, was too inconvenient to be carried out. The English Cabinet therefore availed itself of a dispute* as to which side had commenced the war, and made use of it as a pretext for not adhering to its engagements in this respect; and then advantage was taken of the pecuniary difficulties of the Persian State, so as to induce the Shah to accept a compensation in money as the price of the erasure of the embarrassing clause from the treaty.

From the date of the conclusion of the treaty of Turkomanchai, Russia was obliged to cease from enlarging her territory at the expense of Persia by open and undisguised aggression, inasmuch as she felt that any such acts would be too jealously regarded by Europe in general, and that by

* The history of the dispute was as follows :—

The clause in the treaty of Teheran, whereby England was pledged to assist Persia with a subsidy or with an armed force in case of her going to war with any European Power, applied only in the case of Persia not being the aggressor in such war. The Persian Government maintained that in this case it had not been the aggressor, inasmuch as the occupation of the district of Gokcheh by Russia constituted an act of aggression, and that therefore Persia was entitled to receive from Great Britain a subsidy during the whole period of the war. This claim, however, was not admitted by the English Government, which held that Persia, by invading Russia, had been the primary aggressor in the war. See 'A History of Persia,' 1800–1858, p. 244. By R. G. Watson.

England in particular, any further acts of spoliation would probably be challenged by an appeal to arms. Deeming it expedient on this account to change her tactics, instead of open violence, the plan of intimidation was now resorted to. By maintaining a menacing and insolent attitude, she succeeded, without putting herself forward so as to provoke the hostility and criticism of other European Powers, in using the influence and resources of Persia in furtherance of her own ends.* Her agent at the Court of Teheran did not cease to urge on and encourage Persia to transgress her legitimate boundaries, or to hint that she might indemnify herself for her losses in the West by fresh acquisitions in the East. Encouraged by these representations, Abbas Meerza, the Crown Prince of Persia, in 1831, undertook an expedition into Khorassan, and projected an attack upon Khiva. Rumours soon found their way to India, to the effect that the cooperation and assistance of Russia would soon be apparent in both these enterprises, and that, after the subjugation of Khorassan, a confederate Russian and Persian army would advance upon Herat, and threaten India. Surmises and rumours such as these, vague and untrustworthy as they might be, served to show the tone of feeling prevalent in the public mind; and consequently Russophobia, which had long been quiescent, now began again to disturb the political vision of English and Anglo-Indian statesmen. These apprehensions were further increased by the tone which every now and then broke out in the Russian journals, especially in those which were known to be the official representatives of her opinions. Of these the following specimen, which was remarkable for the explicitness of its avowal of the ultimate designs of Russia in reference to India, will suffice. 'The Russian nation is indignant at the clandestine proceedings of England, or

* Kaye's 'War in Affghanistan,' vol. i. p. 154 *et seq.*

rather of her perfidious ministry, in regard to the troubles of Poland; but our turn is coming. We will tear off her mask. We will show the world how a people is really reduced to slavery. We will soon have an opportunity of judging whether Lord Ponsonby spoke truth when he repeated to everyone who would listen to him, "Russia is no longer of any account; henceforward Poland will prevent her interfering in the affairs of Europe—her government is quite Asiatic." How does this Albion, loaded with debt and now imbued with the most perfidious principles, dare to rouse the bear (for so they call us) who devoured Napoleon with the first army that ever invaded her territories, and marched to Paris to revenge their rashness! Now our turn must come. And we shall soon have no need to make any treaty with this people but at Calcutta,' &c.—*Moscow Gazette, Dec.* 27, 1832.*

Meanwhile, the Persian arms were successful in Khorassan, and emboldened by success, Abbas Meerza, the Crown Prince, contemplated the reduction of Herat. The government of the Shah had long meditated taking its revenge on this city, should opportunity offer, its governor, Shah Kamran, having flatly refused to acknowledge allegiance, or pay any tribute to the Court of Teheran, and also having failed to fulfil other treaty engagements which he had some years previously contracted. In this scheme the Russian agent at Teheran did not fail to encourage him, as it was obviously the interest of his Government to further the conquest of Herat. If it became incorporated into the Persian dominions, the Czar, among other advantages, would have been entitled by the provisions of the treaty of Turkomanchai to place consuls there for the protection of Russian trade, and by this means could have gradually gained a political footing in the city. In 1833 the expedition was actually undertaken. Owing, however, to the death of Abbas

* Bell's 'History of Russia,' vol. iii. p. 140.

Meerza in the autumn of the above year, the prosecution of the siege was arrested, and the project was abandoned for a time. In 1834, Futteh Ali, the reigning Shah of Persia, died at Ispahan, and was succeeded by his grandson. No sooner had this prince ascended the throne, than the accomplishment of his father's darling project, viz., the reduction of Herat, began to occupy his thoughts. He was urged on to this course not only by the promptings of ambition, but also of revenge. He had been deeply mortified at the failure of the first expedition, which the death of his father, Abbas Meerza, had obliged him to abandon. Russian influence, moreover, which was at this time paramount at Teheran, was ever at the ear of the young Shah, feeding his ambitious hopes with prospects of success, while the efforts of the British minister to counteract these representations met with so little success, that when in 1835, in accordance with instructions received from England, he attempted to dissuade the Persian Government from its projects of aggression on Herat, he could obtain no more satisfactory reply than 'that the Shah had very extended schemes of conquest in the direction of Affghanistan.'* In pursuance of this course of policy, in the spring of 1836, the plan of the campaign was arranged, but circumstances prevented it being carried into effect; and during the course of the same year negotiations were entered into with Herat. Shah Kamran, the ruler of that city, however, refused to accede to the unreasonable demands of the Shah of Persia, and the mediation of the British minister, who endeavoured to reconcile the conflicting interests and to bring about an alliance between the contending parties, was unproductive of any result. Shah Kamran would not yield his independence to the Shah, and the Shah would be content with nothing

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 160.

less. Accordingly, in the year 1837, the long-projected campaign was undertaken at last.

For the previous five or six years it had been evident that political events in Central Asia were taking a turn which neither statesmen in England nor India could afford to be indifferent to or overlook. It had long been obvious that the true interest of England lay in preserving as far as possible the integrity of the Persian Empire, so as to keep it out of the hands of Russia, and free from her influence, in order to act as a barrier against any designs of encroachment eastwards which that Power might intrigue to carry into effect, either directly, or by putting forward Persia to promote her own ends, and to mask their real significance. With this object in view it was specially important to make the greatest diplomatic exertions to render the influence of English counsels at the Court of Teheran at least equal to that of Russia. The measures taken with this view by the English Government had, however, not been calculated to attain their desired end, and had, as I have just shown, signally failed. When, therefore, the long-threatened danger to Herat, which was then, as now, asserted to be the gate of India, seemed really imminent, Russophobia, which had long been smouldering, broke forth into a flame, and for the next two or three years may be said to have been at its height. The alarmed tone of the public mind in England had for some time previously found vent in the numerous reviews and pamphlets which appeared upon this subject. Journalists and essayists discussed the question in all its bearings, and bringing forward formidable arrays of facts and arguments, proved beyond contradiction that Russia was intriguing with the view of the ultimate invasion of India.* The peril seen through the hazy mist of ignorance

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 169 *et passim*.

was greatly magnified, and was believed to be imminent. The progress of the siege of Herat by the Persian army; the asserted presence of Russian officers in the Persian camp; the firm belief that the city must soon fall; the conviction then prevalent that the Persian monarch, after taking the city by assault, would under Russian instigation push on his conquests farther eastwards; the knowledge that Vickowitch, the Russian agent at Cabul, had made overtures to Runjeet Singh, had offered to visit his Court, and was in fact knocking at the gates of Lahore: all these facts and anticipations tended to heighten the peril in the public estimation. Statesmen both in England and India began to be impressed with the necessity of learning something of the geography and politics of the countries that intervened between Persia and India, through which it was supposed a Russian army would soon advance.* In this posture of affairs the interest of England plainly lay in preserving the independence and securing the friendship of the Government of Affghanistan. The question of how this was to be done was the real difficulty. The Anglo-Indian Government had never shown any partiality for the Barukzye princes; and proposals and projects for the consolidation and strengthening of the Affghan kingdom under one head by English friendship and alliance found but little favour in the council-chamber at Calcutta. Yet it was thought by many that the British Government, without committing itself to any very decided course of action, might so conciliate the rulers of Affghanistan as to secure their friendly co-operation in resisting the tide of Russo-Persian invasion. Accordingly, Captain Burnes was despatched to Cabul to treat with Dost Mahomed, but 'his powers were so limited, that although he was profuse in his expressions of sympathy, he had not the authority to offer Dost Mahomed any sub-

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 169.

stantial assistance. His mission failed. What wonder? It could have by no possibility succeeded. If utter failure had been the great end sought to be accomplished, the whole business could not have been more cunningly devised. Burnes asked everything and promised nothing. He was tied hand and foot. He had no power to treat with Dost Mahomed. All that he could do was to demand on one hand and refuse on the other. He talked about the friendship of the British Government. Dost Mahomed asked for some proof of it, and no proof was forthcoming. The wonder is, not that the Ameer at last listened to the overtures of others, but that he did not seek other assistance before.'

When Dost Mahomed, who had been honestly and earnestly anxious for the friendship and alliance of England, saw at length that absolutely nothing but empty protestations of friendship were to be obtained from the Anglo-Indian Government, he naturally enough began to turn a willing ear to the tempting proposals of the Russian agent Vickowitch, who had some time previously arrived at Cabul. Vickowitch was of course profuse in his promises, and induced Dost Mahomed to enter into a Russo-Persian alliance *—a step which soon led to his own overthrow by British arms. Meanwhile Russophobia, at this time as prevalent in England as in India, had taken so firm a hold upon the English Cabinet, that the Government wrote pressing letters to the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, urging him to take strong measures to counteract Russia's insidious designs. As all desire, and indeed all chance also, of propitiating Dost Mahomed had now passed away, it was evident that some other project must be set on foot to attain the desired end.

In casting about for the best means of erecting a barrier

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 308.

against Russo-Persian designs, the thoughts of the Anglo-Indian Government naturally reverted to Shah Soojah, the ex-king of Affghanistan (at that time a pensioner at Loodhianah), who had made so many unsuccessful attempts to regain his kingdom. It was thought that if he was restored to his throne by English influence and money, he would be naturally disposed for his own sake to cling for support to England, and be entirely subservient to English interests. And now, looming at first only faint and indistinct in the dim haze of the future, the outline of that terrible and disastrous mistake, the Affghan war, began to shadow itself forth. Like most other projects, it did not start full fledged from the brains of its originators, but passed through several phases before it attained its ultimate shape, until at last the Anglo-Indian Government found itself fairly embarked upon that wholly unjustifiable enterprise. All that was proposed at first was the encouragement of an expedition to be undertaken by Shah Soojah and Dost Mahomed's old enemy, Runjeet Singh, against Affghanistan, while the Anglo-Indian Government, remaining in the background, should supply money and a certain number of British officers to direct the conduct of the campaign.

Shah Soojah, as may be imagined, hailed gratefully the project which was again to restore him to power, nor was Runjeet Singh at all unwilling to enter upon a campaign which promised him a prospect of deposing his rival Dost Mahomed, with whom he had long maintained a jealous enmity.

Accordingly, in May 1838, negotiations were entered into with Runjeet Singh at Lahore to arrange the details of the proposed scheme. But there were advisers round Lord Auckland who persuaded him that these were only half-measures after all, and, as such, likely to result in failure and loss of prestige; and thus it came to pass that these

moderate views gradually expanded into a scheme of far wider scope and deeper significance, until at length, on October 1, 1838, a Government manifesto appeared from Simlah, explanatory of the ostensible objects of the expedition. An examination of the several reasons alleged in this manifesto for undertaking it would be here out of place, but it may be truly remarked that there was not one that could be logically maintained, or that would bear a moment's scrutiny. More than this, it may be maintained that a more utter perversion of facts was never embodied in an English state paper. Orders were at the same time issued for the assembly of a grand army on the frontier to assist Shah Soojah and his allies in the campaign which was to be begun in the winter of 1838–9. The worst feature in the whole affair was that before this manifesto had obtained general currency through India, news arrived that the Shah of Persia had yielded to the demands of the British Government, which had been backed up by the despatch of an expedition to the Persian Gulf, and by the seizure and occupation of the island of Karrack; that the siege of Herat had been raised, and that the Persian army was in full retreat. Thus all pretext for the invasion of Affghanistan was removed.

The expedition, when persevered in after this, obviously became nothing but an expression of defiance against Russian designs. Thus, though there were not wanting many able men who from the first lifted up their voices in the strongest protest against it, the Affghan war was fairly begun. It would be beyond the scope of my present purpose to give an account of the disastrous campaign that ensued.* Suffice it to say, that the whole history of that war,

* The issue of the campaign might have been entirely successful, and the disastrous retreat from Cabul would never have occurred, had not every military blunder it is possible to conceive been committed by the

and of the negotiations which preceded it, must long remain a blot on the escutcheon of England's fame, and even the fearful retribution which befel the invaders only faintly expresses the extent of the evils entailed by it. It is to be feared that England has not yet expiated that great political blunder, as the evil consequences of it have been felt in India ever since, and are palpable enough to this day.

I have in the preceding cursory sketch traced the chain of events that led to the Affghan war, in order to show that the direct primary cause of that campaign must be ascribed to an outbreak of that chronic Russophobia which has from time to time, both in England and India, pervaded the public mind, and which then reached its height.

It was not, of course, to be supposed that during the events which I have just detailed no communication respecting them passed between the English and Russian Governments. Alarmed by the acts of countenance and support given by Count Simonich, the Russian envoy at the Court of Teheran, to the designs of Persia, the English Cabinet in 1837 instructed 'Lord Durham to seek from the Russian minister an explanation of conduct so much at variance with the declarations of the Muscovite Government,' * and to ask 'whether the intentions of Russia towards Persia and Affghanistan were to be judged from Count Nesselrode's declarations, or from the actions of Simonich and Vickowitch.' To this it was replied, that Count Simonich, so far from having been instructed to encourage the Persian expedition against Herat, had been instructed to dissuade the Shah from it by every means in his power, while the proceedings of Vickowitch were entirely disowned. It was re-

officers in command at the above city. Where ordinary prudence was observed, and competent men were in command, as with the force under Nott in Candahar and under Sale at Jellalabad, it was found that a small British force could maintain itself against any number of Affghans.

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. pp. 295–6.

torted, moreover, by Nesselrode, that if there was one Power which might have had any apprehension to entertain or any complaint to prefer, it would have been Russia, who was not ignorant of the indefatigable activity displayed by English travellers to spread disquiet among the people of Central Asia, and to carry agitation into the heart of the countries bordering on the Russian frontier. There was in this retort too much truth to be denied.

The policy of Russia had certainly been aggressive, but it was also undeniable that England had incorporated province after province in India under her rule, till she had gained possession of nearly the whole peninsula, though, in the plenitude of our national self-love, we cherished the conviction that this vast empire had been conquered by a series of purely defensive measures.*

It was scarcely reasonable to suppose, however, that other nations should take the same view of the matter. Judged from a dispassionate European point of view, the English in India were the last people in the world who had a right to complain of the encroachments of others, and therefore England was scarcely entitled to bring Russia to account.

For the next eight or ten years after the English army finally evacuated Affghanistan, we studiously avoided all intercourse with the country; and the feeling of Russophobia which had in 1838 risen to fever heat and brought about so great a catastrophe, had, in the absence of any events calculated to evoke it again, time to cool down and become dormant. Nor was this to be wondered at. Looking back on the decade of 1840–50 from the stand-point of to-day, it certainly seems that it must have required a bold effort of imagination, when once the excitement of the Affghan war had calmed down, to conjure up any vivid sense of danger

* Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 298.

from Russian aggression. Those who kept themselves *au courant* with Asiatic politics still heard, of course, vague rumours whispered from time to time of sinister Russian designs; and isolated facts here and there came to light showing that she was quietly enlarging her borders from the far-off steppes of Eastern and Southern Siberia. Signs such as these were interpreted by alarmists as tending to show the ubiquity and activity of Russian intrigue, which was asserted, with more or less reason, to be silently permeating the whole continent of Asia, from the banks of the Euphrates to the far-off shores of the Pacific.

Vague rumours and surmises on this subject were, however, nothing new. They had been constantly current at all times during the present century, and naturally, therefore, did not excite, or perhaps deserve, any great share of public attention. In the reaction of feeling that naturally followed the consciousness of having acted hastily and wrongfully in entering on the Affghan war, English politicians and statesmen were only too glad to find consolation in the immense distance that separated the English frontier in India from the nearest Russian territory, and to let fade out of sight and memory that phantom, the dread of which had caused so much suffering and disaster.

The Sikh wars, which resulted in the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, advanced our frontier to Peshawur, and made it conterminous with that of Affghanistan. This closer neighbourhood, however, did not serve to bring the British and Affghan Governments into any more friendly connection with each other. Indeed the part taken by Dost Mahomed in our contest with the Sikhs tended rather to estrange still further our political relations with his court. Russia, too, was quiescent in Central Asia for a time, as she, like England, had had a bitter lesson in the utter destruction that befel her ill-fated expedition against Khiva under

General Perovski in 1839–40,* in which 4,000 Russians are said to have perished in the snows of the deserts; and she may reasonably be supposed, while the loss of that ill-fated force was fresh in her recollection, to have been well content to let remain in abeyance for a time a policy that had been fraught with so much peril and disaster. Meanwhile Persia was too much occupied with her own more immediate concerns to attempt any further interference to the eastward. In England public opinion, with the horrors of the Affghan disaster still fresh in its mind, naturally shrank from any more intermeddling in Central Asian affairs, and the feeling of non-intervention that has in more recent years found such emphatic expression and advocacy began faintly to exercise its sway. Events, however, soon occurred which showed that Russophobia, though somewhat dormant of late in England, was still capable of being easily awakened.

In 1852, Yar Mahomed, the famous, or rather infamous, wuzeer of Shah Kamran, died at Herat. Persia, thinking this a favourable opportunity for bringing Herat under her rule, would have sent an army against it, and the city, owing to the internal dissensions that prevailed there, would doubtless have fallen an easy prey into her hands. But the English cabinet, with the traditional belief that the independence of Herat was essential as a bulwark against possible Russian aggression, was scarcely likely to suffer this. Accordingly, by a threat of the suspension of diplomatic relations, she induced, or rather compelled the Shah to sign a treaty, by which he pledged himself not to attack the Affghan territory. Following close upon these events came

* It is well known that Russia's object in sending this expedition was 'to redress the balance which had been so rudely shaken by the English advance to Cabul.' 'Quarterly Review,' October 1865, p. 539.

the Crimean war,* which though it originated in matters more immediately connected with European politics, was still not without its influence on this subject. Though the opinion naturally did not obtain much currency in England, yet in France and most other countries of Europe the war was very generally looked upon as being in reality an Asiatic quarrel, in which exclusively English interests were involved. It was thought that, whatever might be its ostensible causes, a dread that the general course of Russian policy with regard to Constantinople, Asia Minor, and the Eastern question generally, was tending to endanger the ultimate security of our Indian empire was the real reason that England had thrown her sword into the scale.

At this juncture, moreover, Persia seeing that anarchy still prevailed at Herat, and knowing that England had her hands full, seized upon the moment as a favourable one for reviving her old scheme of encroachment eastward. Accordingly, in the beginning of 1856, her troops actually occupied Herat. It is almost needless to say that this event,

* In the year 1853, when it was clear that war was imminent in Europe, and that the Western Powers would ally themselves with Turkey against Russia, the latter used all her efforts to induce Persia to co-operate with her in making war upon the Ottoman dominions. With this object, Prince Dolgorouki, the Russian envoy at Teheran, made the most tempting proposals to the Shah, who vacillated for some time in uncertainty as to which side he should take. Finally he offered to co-operate with the Western Powers against Russia. This offer was declined, as both England and France felt that whatever might be the issue of the war, they would be powerless to prevent Russia from taking her revenge upon Persia in the end. The English cabinet, moreover, foresaw that if Persia gave cause of offence to Russia, she would inevitably be weakened and worsted in any contest that might ensue between them. This result was by no means to be wished for, as it has always since the beginning of the present century been the professed policy of England to preserve Persia as far as possible from dismemberment and collapse, so as to make use of her as a bulwark against Russian advances eastward.

happening as it did whilst the Crimean war was still in progress, was attributed, reasonably enough it may be, to the intrigues of Russia.* That it was so considered by the English cabinet is evident from the promptitude with which it acted. The occupation was immediately recognised as a *casus belli*, inasmuch as it was done in defiance of England, and in direct contravention of the treaty of 1852. A declaration of war followed; an expedition was despatched in the end of 1856 to the Persian Gulf; and after a short campaign, Persia was glad to purchase peace by the abandonment of Herat, after having occupied it for nearly a year.

The terms of the treaty exacted by England from Persia clearly showed, by the stringent clauses in it relative to Herat, that the fear of Russian encroachment eastwards through Persia had again been fully awakened.

The Shah engaged immediately to withdraw his troops and authorities from the territory and city of Herat, and from every other part of Affghanistan; to recognise the entire independence of the city, to relinquish for ever all claims of sovereignty over it and the countries of Affghanistan; and to abstain for ever from all interference in their affairs. Finally, not to take up arms against the countries of Affghanistan before first referring the cause of quarrel to England for arbitration.† Obviously there would have been no object in thus binding down by such very stringent terms a weak and effete Power like Persia, had it not been felt necessary to guard as far as possible against the contingency

* The peace between Russia and the Western Powers, that was concluded in the spring of 1856, altogether threw out the calculations of the Persian Government, as England was then enabled to send an expedition against Persia. It was upon the inability of the former to do this while engaged in the Crimean war that the latter had counted when she ventured to occupy Herat.

† 'A History of Persia, 1800–58,' by R. G. Watson, p. 456.

of her being put forward to further the schemes of her powerful northern neighbour.

The operations of the Persian war were barely over when the Indian mutiny broke out. There were not wanting political quidnuncs who declared that the ubiquitous agents of Russia had here been again at work in stirring up the natives to rebellion, and that it had been their object to cause the outbreak to occur simultaneously with the Persian occupation of Herat, so that England would have had her right hand tied, and been powerless to enforce from Persia, as she did, the evacuation of that city. It is only fair to say, that though it is of course possible that this might have been the case, there was never one tittle of trustworthy evidence to sustain the supposition ; and to anyone who has studied the chain of events that led to the Indian rebellion it must be evident that causes had long been silently at work in India itself, which were quite sufficient to bring about the result independent of any external encouragement. It is, however, not to be denied that had the Indian mutiny broken out six or eight months earlier than it did, England would have been unable, for two years at least, to enforce its demands on Persia.

The court of Teheran easily contrived to evade the spirit of this treaty, in which no provision had been made against the voluntary dependence upon Persia of an Affghan governor of Herat. Strangely enough, the nomination of the future governor of the city seems to have been left to Persia. Taking advantage of this extraordinary oversight, the Shah, on the withdrawal of the Persian garrison, appointed Sultan Ahmed Khan, a nephew of Dost Mahomed, and at that time a refugee at Teheran, to the governorship of the city, deeming it likely that from his enmity with his uncle he would be wholly subservient to Persian interests. Sultan Ahmed did not disappoint his patrons' expectations in this

respect, for during the five years of his rule, he publicly tendered every mark of homage and allegiance to the Shah, struck coin in his name, and continued in undisguised dependence upon him.*

As this relation between Persia and Herat was exactly the opposite of that which the English Government had from the first been at such pains to bring about, an attempt was again made to mend matters.

Accordingly, soon after Sultan Ahmed had assumed the reins of government, a mission of English officers, deputed from the embassy at Teheran, visited Herat with a view of trying by their moral support to render the governor virtually as well as nominally independent; but they met with so little encouragement that the mission may be said to have quite failed, and the officers composing it returned to Teheran. This proceeding soon elicited a counter-demonstration from Russia, but which however can hardly be said to have been more successful than that of England.

A Russian mission under M. de Khanikoff visited Herat in 1858, with the object, it is supposed, of strengthening Russian influence in Western Affghanistan, and establishing, if possible, a commercial footing in the city. Sultan Ahmed, however, had a wholesome dread of being brought into too close relations with Russia, and Persia was jealous of the spread of Russian influence to the east of her own dominions, so M. de Khanikoff was obliged to depart, as the English officers had done, *re infecta* from Herat.†

It would be foreign to the scope of this historical sketch to relate here any further the fortunes of the above city during the ten or twelve years subsequent to the treaty of

* 'Quarterly Review,' October 1865, art. 'Russians in Central Asia,' p. 565.

† Ibid. p. 566.

Paris,* though it may be necessary in a future chapter to refer to the events that have occurred there during the said period.

During the seven or eight years that succeeded the conclusion of this treaty, Russophobia, strange to say, passed in England through a reactionary phase, so to speak, and may be said to have been succeeded in the mind of the majority of English politicians, and the larger section of the English public, by the most complete indifference. Indeed the apathy with which the progress of Russia in Central Asia was, during the above period, regarded, compared with the intense Russophobia that had pervaded the public mind some thirty years previously, was as strange a reaction of feeling as has been witnessed in recent times. This reaction, moreover, was the more unaccountable, inasmuch as if there was danger to our Indian empire in 1838, the gravity of the situation, owing to the far greater proximity of Russia to our frontier, and the immensely increased development of her material resources, is tenfold greater now than then. And yet, indifferent as we seemed to be up to within a very short time ago upon this subject, there were ever, to an attentive observer, indications sufficiently plain that a feeling of insecurity lurked beneath our apathetic exterior, and that England was not so easy upon this point as the principal organs of her press professed her to be. As almost year by year the vague rumours of fresh Russian successes and further conquests reached us in England, the spark of mistrust again flickered forth into a flame, and the old cry, taken up first in India and then re-echoed to England, was raised that England was sleeping while Russia was working, and that it was becoming more and more evident that the conquest of India was the goal of her hopes and machinations.

* The last treaty between Persia and England, the terms of which have been already detailed, was concluded at Paris in 1857.

But the better informed and more influential portion of the press, representing the optimist opinions of the Anti-Russophobists, hastened to assure the English public that this cry was but a resurrection of the old bugbear with which Anglo-Indians had so often frightened it before, and which all sensible men had long ago numbered with the exploded theories and opinions which, though they were cardinal points in our fathers' political creed, we of a younger generation had been wise enough to discard. We were assured that Russia, in thus adding province to province, was merely yielding to the necessities of her position, brought into contact as she was with savage fanatical tribes; that the phantom of Russian invasion was an illusion of bygone days; that Russophobia was a monomania chronic amongst Anglo-Indians; that England had in reality nothing to fear; and that even granting that there was ultimate danger to our Indian empire, she would do much better to await Russia's onset, sheltered by the range of the Himalayas, than by endeavouring by the dubious aid of treacherous Asiatics to thwart her progress while yet she was afar off. But there were many statesmen and politicians, and those too of a high stamp, and reflecting in their opinions much of what is most high-minded and pure in English political feeling, who went much farther than this. Yielding to the impulses of a generous but misguided optimism, and priding themselves somewhat (though it may be unconsciously) upon the liberal and enlightened spirit in which they viewed this question, they professed to hail with pleasure the prospect of England's Indian frontier being one day conterminous with that of Russia, as our difficulties in controlling and managing capricious and fanatical peoples would then be at an end, and we should be able to establish political and commercial relations on a firm basis with a civilised Power. The advocates of this somewhat Utopian theory adduced it as a

happy dispensation of Providence, and a gain to the interests of humanity and the welfare of mankind, that the barbarous countries of Central Asia should be brought under the rule of a strong European government; and that Russian civilisation, though perhaps not of the highest type, should introduce law, order, and security where from time immemorial there had been nothing but the most hideous oppression, cruelty, and misrule. They pointed to the immense strides made by civilisation in Russia since the accession to the throne of the reigning Czar, and to the increased civil and political liberties granted to her people, in order to prove that the Russia of to-day was not that of Potemkin and Catherine. They assured us that Russia as well as England had a 'mission' to fulfil in Asia; that she too, like England, must pass through the aggressive phase of her policy, and that as she rose higher and higher in the scale of civilisation, the influence of public opinion would not fail to modify her brilliant dreams of universal Asiatic empire, and her traditional ideas of what she had long been pleased to consider as her 'manifest destiny.'

These views were further strengthened in the end of the year 1864 by the publication of Prince Gortschakoff's well-known circular addressed to the legations and embassies of the Russian emperor in foreign countries, which professed truly to represent the motives by which Russia was actuated in her Asiatic policy, and in which Europe was assured at some length that as the desired line of territory had at length been reached, there would be thenceforward no farther extension of the Russian frontier in Central Asia, and that as it had now attained its prescribed limit, it might be considered as permanently settled and defined. Addressed ostensibly to the cabinets of Europe, this circular was doubtless specially intended for English ears, in order to calm the apprehensions excited in India, and re-echoed to England,

by the acquisition of territory made by the Russians in their Kokandian campaign of 1864, the close of which was signalised in October of that year by the capture of Chemkend. The anti-Russophobists and quietists were not slow to make capital of this; to adduce it as an additional confirmation of the opinions they had always maintained; and to point to it as a proof of the modified character of Russian policy. Their triumph, however, in this instance did not last long, inasmuch as the hostilities in which Russia engaged with Kokand in the following spring completely stultified the assurances contained in the manifesto as to the finality of Russian conquest.

It was in vain that a large section of the public, who held very opposite views to those which I have just detailed, and who fairly enough drew conclusions as to Russia's future designs from her past history and policy, tried to combat these opinions and arguments. They were willing enough to acknowledge the superiority of Russian civilisation over Tartar savagery, and the various blessings that might possibly follow in the wake of her arms; to concede the undeniable benefits rendered to geographical and geological science by Russian exploration; but still they were unable to understand the prospective benefits to be gained by exchanging barbarous but essentially powerless foes for a strong and wily neighbour, who might at any time be prepared to dispute with us our supremacy in Asia.

They were, and are even now, taunted with being rabid Russophobists and alarmists, with clinging persistently to ideas which are out of date, and which their wiser opponents have outlived; and it was said that, admitting that the danger they were always picturing was a real one, it was so far off, that in this case the maxim 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' might well be held to apply. In fact they could make no head against the apostles of the new political

doctrine. Fortunately the opinions of the anti-Russophobists always carried the day, and for several seemingly good and sufficient reasons. In the first place, they were in complete concordance with the system of 'non-intervention' which it has been the fashion of late to laud so highly as England's best and truest course in dealing with her neighbours. Secondly, adherence to their views involved no immediate action, risk, or expenditure. Thirdly and lastly, even supposing the English Government had been anxious to follow the advice of the Russophobists, it was hard to see what practical shape any course of action to thwart Russia's supposed designs could take.

With the recollection of the untimely fate of Stoddart and Conolly at Bokhara fresh in our recollection, and after our experience of the difficulty of obtaining the release of the Abyssinian captives, we should be hardly likely to despatch envoys to the court of any barbarous Central Asian potentate; while the idea of our sending again an army to prop up any prince of Affghanistan on a tottering throne, on condition of his becoming a bulwark against possible Russian encroachment, would be too preposterous to be even for a moment entertained. As for the course of policy strenuously recommended by the more sensible and moderate politicians, viz. that of selecting some one from among the pretenders to the throne of Affghanistan, and rendering him firm in his government by the prestige of our avowed alliance, and by subsidies of money and arms, the known objections to such a course in the recent state of affairs in that country fully counterbalanced its supposed advantages, and the good sense of the English public told it that a statesman like the late Viceroy of India was at least as likely to be a good judge of what was expedient for England's honour and interest as his many critics. Quieted by these assurances, as to what was the true policy of England towards Russia in

this matter, viz. to bide her time, to be content to consolidate her power in India, to do her duty towards her millions of Indian subjects, and meanwhile to let events in Central Asia take their course, public opinion was well content to dismiss the subject from its thoughts, until again startled and disquieted by the news of some fresh Russian annexation, when it required to be again comforted with the same assurances. But to anyone who has, during the last eighteen months, watched the tone taken by the leading organs of the press, and therefore adopted by public opinion in England, it will, I think, have been perceived that a change of feeling on this subject has again taken place—that Russophobia is veering round into its old phase, and that active apprehension is succeeding our recent apathy and indifference. In other words, it is beginning to be felt that the danger that the Russophobists have always been foretelling is a real one after all, and one too which is far nearer, and which will require to be faced far sooner than had been commonly supposed. This opinion has been further strengthened by the news which has lately reached England, to the effect that the Government of India has at length thought it advisable to depart from its policy of rigid non-intervention in the affairs of Affghanistan, and has assisted Shere Ali, the rightful ruler, (who has, it would appear, succeeded in crushing all his rivals), with money and arms, so as to give him a chance of maintaining himself in undisputed possession of his throne.

This revival of the old feeling of apprehension may be ascribed generally to the following causes. Previous to the capture of Tashkend in June 1865, the wide desert of Kizil Kum (red sand) intervened between the Russian frontier and the upper course of the Oxus, and offered a formidable barrier to further encroachment southwards. Leading through the above city, however, there is a road to the south, through

the city of Khodjend, which possesses the merit of not running through the desert at any point of its course, but passes almost through a succession of fertile valleys; first along that of the Syr, and then that of the Zarafshan, right down to Samarkand, and so on to Bokhara.* As soon, therefore, as this city came into Russian occupation, the flank of the desert of Kizil Kum was as it were turned, and the road southward lay open. Consequently, since the above event in 1865, the progress of the Russian arms in this direction has been unprecedentedly rapid, until in May 1868 Samarkand was occupied; thus bringing the Russian frontier into far closer neighbourhood to our own than had been either anticipated or desired; and events which, though clearly foreseen, it had been hoped would take twenty years to effect, have in a quarter of that period become accomplished facts. Added to this, there has been lately a good deal of light thrown upon Russian doings, past and present, in Central Asia, by the translation and publication in England of extracts from various Russian books, journals, and official documents, which has not tended to allay the anxiety felt upon this subject. It is evident from these, that the Russians are displaying great activity in the administration of their new province of Turkestan, and that they have numerous schemes in contemplation, (and some of them already in progress), not only for developing the resources of the country, but also for improving its communications, so as practically to nullify the immense distances which at present separate it from the more civilised centres of Russian power. The very vehemence, moreover, of the disclaimers of anxiety put forth by the quietists, and their loud denials of the existence of any possible danger from the proximity of Russia to the

* 'Trade Routes of Central Asia,' translated from the Russian 'Nautical Magazine,' July 1862.

Indian frontier, have tended a good deal to defeat their own object and to increase the public apprehension, inasmuch as such assertions, from their obvious untruth, have suggested an opposite interpretation.

The press has, of course, not been slow to recognise the fact that only Affghanistan, which has long been convulsed by internal discords, intervenes between the Indian and Russian frontiers. Consequently the whole question has been reopened, and promises to be as inexhaustible as ever. This is natural enough, for there are two sides to every story; and this is more than ever the case in a subject like this Russo-Indian question, which has for years given rise to so much discussion and argument, and concerning which, from the first, such very opposite views have been long and persistently maintained. Each side is prepared to prove, past contradiction, its own views by the facts and arguments which it may choose to adduce. Having completed the foregoing sketch of the rise and growth of Russophobia in England down to the present day, I propose to review impartially, and to the best of my ability, the present and future aspect of the question; and I hope by this means to enable my readers to judge for themselves, whether this revival of the feeling of apprehension about Russian designs upon India rests on good grounds, and is justified by actual facts. Before doing this, however, it will be advisable to take a brief geographical survey of Turkestan generally, especially those parts of it which are watered by the Syr-Daria, the Oxus, and their tributaries, which have for the last twenty years been the theatre of Russian conquests and annexation, and also a cursory sketch of the present political state of the countries bordering either the actual or political frontier of India.

CHAPTER II.

GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF TURKESTAN.

Up to within the last thirty or forty years, but little or nothing was known of the general geography of the countries watered by the Oxus, the Syr-Daria, and their tributaries, as from many causes they had long been sealed to European eyes. They were included with many others of vast extent in the vague term 'Central Asia,' which was generally used as a convenient and comprehensive phrase to express the whole interior of the continent. The idea conveyed to the European mind by this term, up to within a very recent time, was a vast *terra incognita*, a region, as Lord Wellesley termed it, of rocks, sand, desert, ice, and snow, the general barrenness of whose arid plains was relieved, at rare intervals, by oases of fertile tracts of country. These oases were known to be studded here and there with populous cities, hotbeds of Moslem fanaticism and bigotry, into which hardly any European traveller for centuries past had been known to set his foot and return to tell the tale. To such an extent, indeed, has this want of accurate information and data regarding some portions of Central Asia existed among modern geographers, even to our own day, that in an excellent map of Central Asia,* published by Colonel Walker for the Indian Government in 1866, and compiled from the latest authorities and

* A more recent map of Central Asia than the above has been published by the Indian Government in 1868.

most recent available surveys, the position of some of the cities of Eastern Turkestan, such as Yarkand and Kashgar, had, in the absence of more recent information, to be determined from the observations of the European Jesuits, who, in the middle of the eighteenth century, accompanied the Chinese emperor Kien-Long in an expedition against the Eleuths, or Calmucks, of Zungaria.

Probably the principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico* has never been more fully exemplified than in the interest which this region of the world has, for a great number of English geographers and ethnologists, long possessed. As regards the former, the mystery which so long enveloped the whole subject naturally whetted their desire for the acquisition of more accurate knowledge, while to the latter, the origin and history of the primeval races who had here their dwelling, and the successive changes through which in the course of bygone ages they have passed, has always presented a very wide field for enquiry. To the student of history, these lands, with their vague traditions of an ancient civilisation, stretching far back into the past, and supposed by the Greeks to be coeval with the Assyrian monarchy, possessed the attraction of having been the theatre of action where those world-famed Asiatic conquerors and scourges of their kind, Tamerlane and Chenghis Khan, first nursed their nascent fortunes, ere they went forth on their respective careers of conquest, and rose each to the zenith of their fame. Some of the chief cities of this region, moreover, such as Bokhara and Samarkand, situated in fertile plains, are known four or five centuries ago to have carried on free mercantile intercourse with some of the commercial States of Europe, and in those days, and even as late as the sixteenth century, the latter city was frequented by European ambassadors, including one from

the King of Spain.* Stretching, however, far and wide around these more favoured spots (jewels set in the sand, as they are termed by the natives), were known to be trackless sandy deserts and barren steppes, supposed to be the abode, ever since the earth was peopled, of predatory nomad tribes—born ruffians and man-stealers, every man of them—men whose lives were one long razzia of plunder, bloodshed, and strife, and of whom it might truly be said that their hands were against every man, and every man's hand against them.

During the last twenty or thirty years, however, the rays of European light and enquiry have, after so long an interval of night, begun to light up the darkness of Central Asia; and owing chiefly to the gradual approach of the Russian frontier from the north to the English boundary on the Himalaya, immense additions have, by the explorations and surveys of British and Russian officers, been made to our general geography of Central Asia. Much very interesting information has, moreover, been gathered from the accounts of the various European travellers and adventurers who have from time to time ventured into these inhospitable regions—daring and resolute men, who have gone thither literally with their lives in their hands, and traversed the length and breadth of some of these lands. Some, like Schlagenweit, have paid the penalty of their temerity with their lives; others, like Vambery, have returned to give to the civilised western world the benefit of the knowledge so perilously acquired. Among the English officers who thus distinguished themselves may be mentioned the names of Stoddart and Conolly, who both

* See Sir R. Murchison's address to the Royal Geographical Society at the anniversary meeting, May 27, 1867. On this subject, the learned President also observed: 'Even our own Queen Elizabeth was so anxious in the first year of her reign to open out an intercourse by way of the

perished miserably at Bokhara in 1841; D'Arcy Todd, Eldred Pottinger, Edward Conolly, Alexander Burnes, and others of lesser note, none of whom survived to wear for long the laurels they had earned.* The Affghan campaigns, moreover, furnished opportunities of geographical exploration and discovery which the officers of the Indian army did not fail to make use of; and many of them, in common with those mentioned above, contributed each their quota to the stock of knowledge already acquired. As regards the progress made in more recent years by British officers in India, I cannot do better than quote verbatim the following paragraph of a most learned and interesting article entitled 'Central Asia,' which appeared in the 'Quarterly Review' of October 1866, and from which I must acknowledge to having already drawn materials for some of the preceding remarks.

'Putting aside for the present all discussion of the elevated region between Peshawur and the sources of the Oxus, which nevertheless contains matter of considerable interest, we pass on to the scene of England's greatest geographical triumph. Cashmere and Thibet, which even as late as the time of Humboldt were to a certain extent enveloped in mystery, are now as well known as the provinces of India Proper. Something had been done in the way of description and geographical outline by the preliminary labours of Moorcroft and Trebeck, of Jacquemont, Vigne, and Hugel, and still later by the more scientific enquiries of Cunningham and Henry Strachey; but all this sinks into insignificance when compared with the grand achievements of Captain Montgomerie and Godwin Austen. The great trigonometrical survey of India, having, under the direction of these officers,

Caspian with Persia, that she addressed a letter to the "Great Sophi, Emperor of the Medes and Parthians."'

* 'Quarterly Review,' October 1866, art. 'Central Asia,' pp. 465–6.

passed the Himalayas, and swept over the Cashmere valley, has, during the last few years, fairly grappled with the Trans-Indus region. It has worked its way from station to station at elevations sometimes over 20,000 feet. It has mapped the entire range of the Kara-Koram and Kuen-Luen, and, amongst its latest successes, has pushed out a supplementary reconnaissance both to Yarkend and Khoten in the great plain of Chinese Tartary beyond the mountains. That a survey of this extensive and exhaustive nature should have been carried on by British officers in a country under foreign rule, and at a distance of 500 miles from the British frontier, is not less creditable, we think, to their diplomatic skill than it is to their hardihood and professional zeal.' Since this was written, another great achievement has been added to the previous labours of the officers of the Indian survey, in the shape of a new map of Turkestan and the surrounding countries, which has lately been published, in four sheets, by the Indian Government at Calcutta. In order to illustrate the contributions of Russian geographers to our knowledge of Central Asia, I again quote from the article above mentioned.

'In this field of honourable emulation Russia is entitled to a very prominent place. As her arms have advanced upon the one side from the Ili River and Lake Balkash to the Issik-Kul Lake and the great Thian-Shan range, and upon the other from the Aral Sea for 1,200 miles along the course of the Jaxartes, to Turkestan, Chemkend, Tashkend, and now to Khodjend itself, so have the scientific officers, who accompany or precede her army, continued to lay before the world the results of their professional labours. The journal of the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg has been enriched for many years past with a series of papers by Semenoff, Golubieff, Veniukoff, Boutakoff, and others, describing the progress of discovery in Zungaria

and Russian Turkestan; and many of these excellent memoirs, which, among valuable results, connect all the recent acquisitions of Russia as far south as the Thian-Shan range with the great Siberian survey, and further determine for the first time, on certain data, a series of astronomical positions along a belt of 30° of longitude from the Aral Sea to the Chinese frontier, have been transferred to the pages of our own geographical journal in London.' As a fresh illustration of the additions that year by year are being made to our knowledge of hitherto utterly unexplored regions in this quarter of the globe, may be quoted the recent expedition of the trained Pundit, who, despatched by Captain Montgomerie, of the Indian Trigonometrical Survey, and provided with instruments, in 1866 travelled from Nepal to Lhassa, and thence through the valley of the Brahmaputra to its source. Secretly, and at the peril of his life, he managed to take astronomical bearings of the different places on his route, and made as many general observations of the country as the necessity for keeping concealed the real object of his journey would allow.

It may be mentioned here, that the greatest hindrance hitherto to the compilation of an accurate map of a great part of Central Asia has been owing to the fact, as stated lately by Sir H. Rawlinson,* that its geography 'has been confused and mystified beyond all conception by a very singular network of ingenious forgery or romance. It certainly was the case that both English and Russian geographers had had to contend, for many years past, with a fabulous system of geography in reference to these regions. There was a certain paper in the archives of the Russian Government which had been followed by all Russian geographers;

* See a paper 'On Trade Routes between Turkestan and India,' by Major-General Sir H. C. Rawlinson, K.C.B., 'Proceedings of Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xiii. No. 1. Issued February 10, 1869.

and a certain voluminous document was also in the archives of the British Government, which many years ago had been submitted to the elder Mr. Arrowsmith, and served as the foundation of that part of his map of Central Asia which had been considered as a standard authority. Both these documents were utter forgeries, the product of the ingenious imagination of a clever man—a man well acquainted with the subject, but who invented the itineraries and actually extemporised a system of geography. The Russian document was stated to be the Travels of a certain Georg Ludwig von ——, supposed to have been a doctor in the English service, who was sent out into Central Asia to buy horses in a region where there was no possibility of getting horses. The manuscript volume which we had in the Foreign Office was supposed to be the journal of a commission sent by the Emperor of Russia to survey our frontiers—a commission which never had any existence. Thanks to this itinerary, we were now able to expose the whole thing, and to test the authenticity of these Memoirs.'*

Thus it has come to pass that the light of superior knowledge has gradually been disclosing the errors and misconceptions of former geographers, and consequently the area of unexplored country in Central Asia has for some years past been waxing narrower and narrower, so that it may reasonably be foretold that in a few more years, despite the prejudices of barbarous races, there will be but few tracts where western science, as represented by the compass, barometer, and theodolite of modern geographers, shall not have penetrated, and published to the world all that is to be known of these hitherto little-known regions of the world.

After this digression, which has been made to show what

* For a detailed account of this very curious geographical forgery, see the article before mentioned, entitled 'Central Asia,' in the 'Quarterly Review,' October 1866.

has been achieved up to the present time, I come to the consideration of the countries situated between the Syr-Daria and the northern political frontier of India.

The portion of Central Asia more immediately connected with the subject-matter in hand may be divided into three sections. Of these the southern section is Affghanistan, the north-western is Turkestan Proper—in which may be included Russian Turkestan—and the three nominally independent Uzbeg khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand. The north-eastern section is Eastern Turkestan—or, as it is still sometimes called, Chinese Tartary, or Little Bokhara. Turkestan Proper, as distinguished from Eastern Turkestan, comprises an immense area. It may be described in general terms as stretching from the Caspian Sea on the west to Eastern Turkestan, or Chinese Tartary, on the east. For its northern boundary a line may be drawn almost from the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul westwards along the river Chui, and then on to Fort Perovski, after which the boundary is marked by the Syr-Daria right up to the Aral Sea. From the south-western corner of the Aral the line may be continued due westward to the Caspian. The southern limits of Turkestan are conterminous with the northern provinces of Affghanistan, from the southern extremity of the great Pamir steppe to the confines of the north-eastern provinces of Persia, thence to the south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea.

Turkestan may be divided into four sections; namely, the three Uzbeg principalities of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand, and Russian Turkestan.

The most westerly of these is Khiva, which extends from the Caspian for some distance beyond the Oxus, where its frontiers are merged in the sandy wastes of the desert. To the east of Khiva is the territory of Bokhara, while beyond this State, in the most easterly corner of

Turkestan Proper, is Kokand—i.e. so much of it as has escaped incorporation with the Russian Empire. Stretching along the north-eastern frontier is the newly-constituted province of Russian Turkestan, extending from the river Chui in the north down as far as Samarkand and the valley of the Zarafshan. Over a great part of this vast area there extend, more especially to the west, vast desolate plateaux and waterless steppes—such, for instance, as the deserts of Kizil Kum and Kara Kum.

The western portion of Turkestan appears to be a vast desert plain, unrelieved by any mountains, whereas in the east and north-east it is intersected by numerous mountain ranges. The most northerly of these are the Kara Tau and Boroldai mountains, while the most southerly are those whose melted snows feed the sources of the Oxus.

The Syr-Daria, or Jaxartes, which is one of the longest rivers in Asia, is mainly formed from the confluence of three tributaries—the Naryn, the Gulishan, and the Jumgol. The former of these, the Naryn, which is the main stream of the river, has its sources in a series of valleys which lie longitudinally between the main and outlying northern ranges of the Thian-Shan; thence it flows in almost a due westerly direction, being joined by both the minor affluents above mentioned before it reaches Namengan. Nearly half-way from its source it enters the khanate of Kokand, still retaining its character of an impetuous mountain stream. On emerging into the plains below Khodjend, the river, which here takes a short bend to the north, becomes navigable,* and remains so throughout the remainder of its lengthened course. Southwards from the left bank stretches

* The navigation of this river to the Aral Sea is said to be still beset with many difficulties and drawbacks, notwithstanding the efforts that the Russians have made, and are still making, to render it a highway for their steamers into the heart of Turkestan.

the desert of Kizil Kum, which extends to the eastern shores of the Aral Sea. Northwards from the right bank is that of Kara Kum, which stretches away for miles towards the Orenburg frontier. Below Fort Perovski the Syr-Daria divides itself into two arms, one of which, the Kara-Usak, extending into a wide swampy lagoon covered with reeds, is scarcely accessible to ships. The other, the Djaman, remains navigable, and at Fort No. 2 reunites with the Kara-Usak. The distance between Fort Perovski and No. 2 Fort is that which presents the greatest difficulty for shipping, inasmuch as vessels drawing three feet of water cannot pass the Djaman Daria, even in summer time, when the river is fullest, except at flood tide. Means, however, have been taken by the Russians for deepening the channel of the river at this point. The Syr-Daria thus enters the Sea of Aral by two branches, and at its mouth are various islands. Three ferries cross the river: one at Mehrem, near the city of Kokand; a second on the road from Bokhara to Tashkend, about fifty versts from the latter city; and the third, called Utschkalk, near the town of Hazret, or Turkestan.

The other great river of Turkestan is the Oxus, or Amu-Daria. Some of the waters that feed the sources of this river flow down from the Pamir steppe, the great elevated plateau which may be said to be the radiating point in the hydrographical system of Central Asia. It takes its rise in the Sar-i-kul, a Pamir lake between 300 and 400 miles south of the Syr-Daria. This lake is described by Wood, the well-known explorer of the sources of the Oxus, as lying in the form of a crescent, 15,600 feet above the level of the sea, fourteen miles long, and one broad. It is surrounded on three sides by hills; those on the south rising into mountains mantled with eternal snow, from which never-failing source the river is supplied. After issuing from the westernmost extremity of the Sar-i-kul (Yellow Lake), it flows in a

westerly direction, and watering with its southern affluents the more northerly provinces of Affghanistan, continues in one main channel in a direction almost parallel to the Syr-Daria, through a portion of the khanates of Bokhara and through the centre of Khiva. When it reaches a point (lat. 42° 12′, long. 60° 15′) between the towns of Kipchak and Khodjaili, it begins to bifurcate, after which its two streams again branch off into the several arms which form its delta. The centre of this portion of the basin forms a sort of depression, into which the waters of all the main branches, emptying themselves, spread out into a series of wide shallow lagoons covered with reeds. These again discharge their surplus waters by different channels into the Sea of Aral. The principal channels which thus form the mouths of the Oxus are four in number, and, beginning from the westward, are the Abugir, the Tarlyk, the Ulkun, and the Yangsu.

In discussing the Russo-Indian question of late, it has often been taken for granted, and even asserted, that the Oxus is navigable without let or hindrance for three or four hundred miles from its mouth, and that the Russians thus will be able, by means of their steamers, to reach the northern frontiers of Affghanistan. This is, however, quite an erroneous idea. Admiral Boutakoff, in his account of his survey of the river, carried on at intervals between the years 1848 and 1859,* gives a separate and detailed account of each of the four principal mouths of the river as mentioned above; and it appears that not one of them is fit for navigation, owing to the shallowness of the water, and to the fact of the main channels of the streams continually shifting.

Even at the mouths of the Ulkun-Daria,† which is the

* An account of these surveys was read before the Geographical Society in London on March 11, 1867, and afterwards published in the Society's journal.

† Literally translated, 'Great River.'

main channel by which the river empties itself into the Sea of Aral, it appears that there is sometimes scarcely any water to be found. This branch, which is the outlet by which a large lake (Airtin Kul), filled by the overflow of the various offshoots of the river, relieves itself of its surplus waters, is fed by numerous affluents in its course, and con tinues a broad deep stream 80 to 180 yards wide, with depths varying from three to five fathoms for about forty-seven miles after leaving the above lake, when it throws out a supplementary branch (Kazak-Daria). Though its waters sensibly decrease from this point, it continues an easily-navigable stream up to a point about seven miles from the Aral Sea, where it again bifurcates. At its mouth the depth of water is subject to constant change, and is often very shallow; so much so, indeed, that when Boutakoff visited it in July 1859, he found only 2½ feet of water in its channel, and was obliged to unload his steamer, and dig a channel inch by inch for it with spades. He seems, moreover, to have met with similar difficulties at all the mouths of the river which he explored. It may be taken for granted that, had it been possible, Russian steamers would long ago have ascended the Oxus, and established a line of forts on its banks. These views are corroborated by M. Vambery in his account of his journey on the river from Khiva to Kungrad and back, who is of opinion that the 'Oxus has scarcely the capabilities of becoming the powerful artery for traffic and communication in Central Asia which politicians, when speaking of the future of Turkestan, seem to expect.'* He goes on to say, 'With steamers on the Oxus, the Russians would not only have been able to keep the khanate of Khiva in check, to garrison the fortress of Kungrad, Kiptchak, and Hazaresp, but they would have had the power of introducing with

* 'Sketches of Central Asia,' pp. 142–3.

the greatest ease a strong *corps d'armée* by Karakul into Bokhara, and thus into the heart of Central Asia, had not the extraordinary physical difficulties of this route rendered such a scheme impracticable. Apart from the waterfall at Khodjaili, the Oxus offers perhaps the greatest difficulties to navigation in its numerous sandbanks, which in some parts extend for many miles, and at the same time undergo such rapid changes in consequence of the large quantity of sand the stream carries along with it, that it is quite impossible to take observations, and even the most experienced steersman can do no more than guess the navigable channel by the colour, but can never indicate it with confidence or certainty.'*

Of the more southerly portion of Bokhara, i.e. the country in the valley of the Zarafshan, around the capital and Samarkand, and from thence southwards towards Karshi and Shahr-i-Sabz, but little has till quite recently been known. Samarkand, indeed, had been so long shut out from European ken, that when M. de Khanikoff, the well-known Russian Orientalist (who visited it as a member of a mission sent there by his Government in 1841), published an account of the city, he was the first European who had done so for more than four hundred years, i.e. from the days of the Spanish envoy Gonzalez de Clavijo, who described the capital of Timour as he saw it in the year 1404. M. de Khanikoff also gives an account of a journey which he made from Samarkand to Karshi,† one of the largest towns of Bokhara, and which is the most southerly point to which a Russian column has yet penetrated. M. Vambery also visited Samarkand a few years ago, and now, since the Russians have

* 'Sketches of Central Asia,' p. 143.

† Khanikoff's 'Berichte über das Thal des Zerafshan. Weg von Samarkand nach Karshi.' See 'Denkschrift über den untern Lauf des Oxus zum Karabugas Hoff, von Karl Zimmerman. Berlin, 1865.'

occupied it for more than a year, the adjacent country will probably be fully explored.

Though, throughout a great portion of the regions comprised under the name of Turkestan, there extend (more especially towards the west, in which the means of irrigation are more scanty), vast sandy deserts and barren steppes, such as the deserts of Kizil Kum and Batak Kum, yet this is by no means the case as regards the whole area of the three khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand. M. Vambery, who, in his 'Sketches of Central Asia,' calls certain districts of these three provinces the oasis countries of Turkestan, goes so far as to declare that they far surpass 'the known parts of European and Asiatic Turkey, Affghanistan, and Persia, both in the wealth and variety of their productions; nay, that it might be difficult to find in Europe, flourishing as it is, and rich in every blessing, a territory that would rival these favoured lands.'* The great fertility of the tracts bordering portions of the Oxus, the Syr-Daria, and the Zarafshan, has long been proverbial among Asiatics, and is attributed by M. Vambery chiefly to the climate. Though, of course, over such a vast extent of territory every variety of temperature may be met with, from winter snow to summer heat, the same author states that on the average the climate, which is neither harsh nor can yet be termed mild, responds to that of Central Europe. Another cause of the great productiveness of these districts is the rivers which intersect them. Foremost in importance is the Oxus, and next the Zarafshan. The waters of these rivers, conducted by an elaborate system of irrigating canals, are made to flow through the plains and valleys that extend on either side of their respective banks, thus naturally increasing the fertility of the soil. The countries, moreover, that are watered by the Jaxartes and its many affluents in the upper part of its basin are

* 'Sketches of Central Asia,' by A. Vambery, p. 232.

second to none in fertility and general productiveness. Their principal products are wheat of several kinds, barley, rice (in enormous quantities), dye-plants, oil-plants, silk, and, above all, cotton. With regard to this last product, M. Vambery remarks that it promises to become an important article for the future. The Turkestan cotton, especially that of Khiva, is considered to be far superior to that of other Asiatic countries, and is cultivated over a very large area of land in the three khanates. The quantity produced, moreover, has steadily increased during the last fifteen years or so in the most surprising manner, and under a strong settled government this will probably continue to be more than ever the case. This testimony of M. Vambery as to the general productiveness of the irrigated districts of the three Uzbeg khanates of Turkestan, and of their cereal and mineral wealth (especially that of Kokand) is also corroborated by Mr. Lumley in his report on Russian trade with Central Asia, and also by General Romanovski in the book lately published by him on the Central Asian question. The latter dwells especially on the fact, that American cotton of all sorts can be grown in the newly-acquired Russian provinces, wherever sufficient water for irrigation can be procured.

With regard to the mineral productions of the three khanates, not much has as yet been accurately ascertained, but the information hitherto acquired seems to show that they are by no means deficient in the precious metals. The rivers are said to be auriferous, and in the hills on both sides of the Jaxartes, in its upper course, mines of lead, iron, and copper have been ascertained to exist. General Romanovski states also, that there is a good prospect of finding silver and gold. But a still more important product than all these is the coal, which some two or three years ago was discovered by the Russians in large quantities in the Karatau mountains, north of the Syr-Daria.

The following extract from the 'Invalide Russe,' which appeared about two years ago relative to this discovery, may here be quoted. Apropos of the Aral flotilla, the said paper stated:—'As regards fuel, this desideratum has been supplied by the discovery of coal-fields in Turkestan. In 1863, Colonel, now General Cherniayeff, when reconnoitring the country near the Karatau hills at 120 versts from the Syr-Daria, near Tchulak Kurgan, found coal, which on being analysed proved of excellent quality. Closer investigations being then instituted, Lieutenant-Colonel Tartarinoffe, of the Mining Engineers, discovered other strata on the southern declivities of the Karatau, 90 versts from Chemkend. There is therefore every reason to anticipate that by the end of this year (1867) the Aral squadron will have been provided with an ample and permanent supply of Turkestan coal.' These anticipations have since been amply realised, for from accounts received from Tashkend, early in the beginning of the present year, not only has the coal-mine above mentioned proved very valuable and extensive, but other coal-fields have been discovered in the same neighbourhood, of such large extent as practically, it is said, to render the future supply inexhaustible.* In addition to these quite recent discoveries, as far back as 1841, when MM. Khanikoff and Lehmann went on a mission to Samarkand and Bokhara, coal was ascertained to exist in the valley of the Zarafshan.

It will be seen from this sketch of the productions of the khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand, that they are by no means sterile provinces, but that, on the contrary, there extend throughout a great portion of their area fertile and well-cultivated tracts, rich in cereal, mineral, and other resources, which under a settled form of government will doubtless be capable of considerable development.

* See Berlin correspondent's letter in the 'Times' of Jan. 12, 1869.

CHAPTER III.

EASTERN TURKESTAN.

EASTERN, or Chinese Turkestan, as it is still sometimes called, though now it is only Chinese in name, is a large low-lying plateau, bounded on the north by the great Thian-Shan range of mountains, which separates it from Zungaria, and on the south by the Kuen-Lun and the Karakoram. Towards the west it is bounded by the great Pamir steppe, a vast elevated plateau of probably the highest table-land in Asia, and which is supposed to be, from its northern to its southern extremity, some 700 or 800 miles in extent. Towards the west the boundary is but faintly defined, as on this side the confines of Eastern Turkestan are gradually merged into the vast desert of Gobi.

Under Chinese rule, the last vestige of which was swept away about three years ago, the country was divided into twelve provinces, viz. Kashgar, Yarkand, Khoten, Ush-Turfan, Aksu, Bai and Sairam, Shayar, Bigur and Kurli, Kucha, Turfan, Karashar and Kummul. These provinces were under the general control of a 'Khan Amban,' a high Chinese officer, whose official residence was at Yarkand. Subordinate to him were twelve local governors of the provinces, who were termed Wangs or Hakims. The country is also known by the name of Alti-shahar or Alti-chakan—meaning 'The Six Cities'—from the principal towns which it contains, viz. Yarkand, which is considered the capital, Kashgar, Aksu, Khoten or Elchi, Yangishahar and Ush-Turfan.

It will be seen from the definition of the boundaries of Eastern Turkestan which has just been given, that it is enclosed on three sides by high mountain ranges. Though the air is very dry, and the soil is generally of a sterile, sandy, and stony character, yet these disadvantages are in some degree counterbalanced by the numerous streams, which, flowing down from the melted snow on the mountains (which encircle the country on three sides) into the plains below, irrigate the land and fertilise it wherever it is fitted for cultivation. The principal streams which flow through the country are the Yarkand, Kashgar, and Khoten rivers, which, as well as several smaller ones, are all tributaries of the Tarym, or Ergol. This river, after receiving their waters, flows due east till it empties itself into Lob Nor. Possessed of a fairly temperate and very healthy climate, irrigated by numerous rivers and streams, with considerable but imperfectly developed mineral resources, with cities such as Kashgar, Aksu, and Yarkand, situated on the highways of commercial traffic, Eastern Turkestan, despite the general sterility of its soil,* possesses many elements of prosperity, and may fairly be classed among the more favoured regions of Central Asia. Recent and trustworthy information about the country is scanty enough, for it has ever been remarkable, even among the *terræ incognitæ* of Central Asia, for its inaccessibility to European travellers. So much, indeed, has this been the case, that with the exception of the Jesuits, who accompanied the Chinese Emperor Kien-Long, in 1758, when he brought the country under his rule, only three educated European travellers are known to have visited it since the time of Marco Polo, in the thirteenth century. These three visits

* It may be remarked that the provinces of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khoten contain large tracts of fertile, well-cultivated lands, and are the most populous and prosperous provinces of the country.

have all been of quite recent occurrence. The first was made by the ill-fated Schlagenweit, who penetrated from India as far as Kashgar, in 1857, where he fell into the hands of Walee Khan Turra, a chief who had temporarily usurped the government of the city. He paid the penalty of his temerity with his life. The second was made in the following year by M. Valikhanoff, a Russian officer, who was sent into Eastern Turkestan in the year 1858 by his Government, in order to gain information concerning the political and commercial affairs of the country. The third visit was made eight years later, in 1866, by Mr. Johnson, of the Indian Trigonometrical Survey, who visited Khoten at the invitation of the reigning prince. The report of this latter traveller was published some time ago in the journal of the Royal Geographical Society, and need not therefore be further noticed.

The personal narrative of M. Valikhanoff, which has just been translated into English, is, however, not so well known, and is very interesting in a geographical point of view. The translator, in his preface, states that it was given to him by 'M. Semënof, who has all Captain Valikhanoff's MSS. in his own hands, and who has prepared this one from the traveller's own record. It is very evidently condensed, and leaves, apparently, a great deal unsaid; but, as it stands, it shows clearly enough the general object of the perilous journey of the Russian officer. He was one who was well fitted for the execution of the prying and delicate political mission with which he was charged; he was essentially a political agent; he was not a scientific man, but was venturesome, brave, and very observant, as well as more than half an Asiatic himself. The expedition was suggested and started by the Russian Government, and its success was insured in every possible way by the local Russian military authorities.'

In one respect the version of Valikhanoff's narrative that has reached us in England is disappointing. As regards the political state of the country at the time when he visited it—i.e. in 1858–59, it gives hardly any information at all. It appears that in July 1858, travelling in the disguise of an assumed character, he accompanied a caravan which started from Fort Vernoë, on July 10, 1858. The caravan crossed two chains of the Thian-Shan range, by the Zauku and Djitym-Asu passes (the former of these is almost due south of the eastern extremity of Lake Issyk-Kul); thence, proceeding in a south-westerly direction, it reached Kashgar on October 13. M. Valikhanoff stayed in that city for five months during the winter of 1858–59, and varied his sojourn there by making an expedition half-way to Yarkand. On March 23, 1859, he started, in company with the caravan, on his return journey from Kashgar by the only route which was open so early in the year, viz. that running through the Kokandian fort of Kurtka. Proceeding in a north-easterly direction, he reached the Chatyr-Kul lake on March 30, and arrived on April 4 at Fort Kurtka, which stands on the right bank of the Naryn. From this point his route lay in a due easterly direction till he regained the Zauku pass, and travelling on from thence by the same route as that by which he had come, he arrived safely at Fort Vernoë in the end of April. M. Valikhanoff seems to have encountered innumerable perils and hardships *en route*, both from the severity of the climate and also from the depredations of the lawless freebooters of the country through which his journey lay. The former may be judged of from the fact, that out of one hundred and one camels which started with the caravan from Fort Vernoë, only thirty-six reached Kashgar—the rest having perished from cold and insufficient fodder on the way.

The caravan with which M. Valikhanoff travelled does not

seem to have been commercially a profitable venture, but it would seem that the report that he sent to his Government satisfied it of the desirability of gaining, if possible, a commercial footing in the country. In the very next year after his return it was stipulated in the treaty of Pekin, concluded between the Russian and Chinese Governments, that the former should be allowed to appoint a consul and establish a factory at Kashgar. This stipulation, however, was never attempted to be carried into effect, and when, four or five years later, Chinese domination in Eastern Turkestan came to an end, the clause in the treaty became of course a dead letter.

There is a prospect of our soon gaining additional geographical information about this region. Mr. Michell, in his introduction to the translation of M. Valikhanoff's journey, says that a description of 'last year's (1868) reconnaissance in the Cis-Naryn region, about the Chatyr-Kul lake, and near Kashgar, executed by Colonel (now General) Poltoratski,* may be expected to appear soon.' It is to be hoped we shall soon be favoured with an English version of this exploration, as it will be of considerable interest.

Eastern Turkestan may be said to derive its chief importance in connection with the subject under discussion from two facts. Firstly, the great advantage which its geographical position gives it as a commercial thoroughfare, inasmuch as through it there run two of the great trade routes between the central countries of Eastern and Western Asia. It may, therefore, on this account be considered by Russia a very desirable acquisition. Secondly, as the southern border of the country is conterminous with that of Cashmere, it will be probably the first point where the long-anticipated and

* Since these sheets were in the press, an account of the expedition of this officer has appeared in the last March-April journal of the French Geographical Society, pp. 233-234.

inevitable contact of Russia with our Indian political frontier will take place.

The inhabitants, the majority of whom have long been bigoted Mahomedans, are said to be of Turkish origin, though in the present day they appear to be of a most heterogeneous breed, and to be composed of the descendants of Sarts, Uzbegs, Kirghiz, and the like, besides a small element of Kalmucks. In addition to these, mention should be made of a most important clan, the Dungens, or, as they are called in the reports of the Punjab Government, the Tunganīs, who, five or six years ago, were instrumental in expelling the Chinese from the country, and who subsequently played a most prominent part in the political fortunes of Alti-shahar.*

A more detailed account of the antecedents of this sect will, however, be found in a subsequent sketch of the political history of Eastern Turkestan.

* This name, meaning 'The Six Cities,' is commonly supposed, as already remarked in this chapter, to be derived from the six principal towns that are situated in the country. But another, and, I think, more probable explanation of the origin of this term is to be found in an article 'On the Rising of the Dungens or Mussulmen Population of Western China,' translated by Mr. R. Michell from the Russian 'Military Journal' for August 1866. It is to the following effect. Some time during the fifteenth century, a celebrated Mahomedan preacher from Bokhara arrived at Kashgar, and soon became an object of public worship. His name was Hodja Mahtuma Aziam. On his death, this worship was, according to Asiatic custom, transferred to his sons, Ishan Kalian and Isaak Vali. The rivalry between these two brothers, and probably also differences in their theological views, soon divided Mahtuma Aziam's followers into two sects, who became bitterly hostile to each other. The people of Kashgar Aksu and Ush-Turfan declared for Ishan Kalian, while those of Yarkand, Khoten, and Yangi-shahar sided with Isaak Vali. Hence these towns came to be called 'The Six Cities.'

CHAPTER IV.

CHRONICLE OF RECENT EVENTS IN TURKESTAN.

In order to represent the recent advances in Central Asia in as clear a light as possible, I propose to give a sketch of the progress of late events in Turkestan, and of the career of Russian conquest there, from the date of the publication of Prince Gortschakoff's well-known circular in November 1864 down to the commencement of the current year.

It appears, from a book lately published at St. Petersburg by General Romanovski,* who played a prominent part in some of the events that have lately taken place in Turkestan, that up to the capture of Chemkend, in the end of 1864, all the fighting that took place was in fulfilment of a scheme of annexation, which the Russian Government had for a long time previously contemplated, and resolved to carry out.† The object of this project was to connect, by a continuous frontier-line, the extreme flanking portions of the Russian territory in Central Asia, so as to leave no interval of independent country between. The two points which it was

* 'Notes on the Central Asian Question. By D. T. Romanovski, with Appendices and a Map of Turkestan. St. Petersburg, 1868.' This book has just been translated for the Indian Government.

† The admission by General Romanovski that a scheme of annexation was carefully matured and determined upon long ago by the Russian Government, completely stultified the views so often advocated by the optimist school of Central Asian politicians in England, who were wont to declare that all annexations were forced upon Russia by the necessity of her position, &c.

thought desirable to connect were Fort Peroffski in the west and Fort Vernoë in the east, which has been in Russian occupation since the year 1854. The boundary-line first proposed with this object was, roughly speaking, to run along the course of the Syr-Daria to as far as Fort Peroffski, and thence, in a south-easterly direction, along the northern slopes of the Kara Tau and Alexandrovski mountains, to Fort Vernoë. Russia's avowed object in this scheme was to be able to control the intermediate nomads, and also, from her advanced position, to bring her influence to bear more effectually upon the three khanates of Turkestan. The original programme was steadily followed up till the beginning of 1864; but as it approached completion, it gradually expanded its proportions under the auspices of the Russian generals entrusted with its execution, until it was found convenient for many reasons to extend the boundary-line farther south, so as to include Chemkend, which city was accordingly stormed, taken, and annexed in October 1864. From this point the Russians were able to command the resources of a fertile district, which was described at the time by the 'Invalide Russe' as 'the granary of all the country between the Tchui and the Syr-Daria.' As soon as this last feat of arms had been accomplished, the cabinet of St. Petersburg, conscious probably that such a violation of the principles of action she had hitherto professed in her Central Asian conquests would be liable to misconstruction in Europe, and might possibly excite grave apprehensions in England, addressed the following circular to the 'legations and embassies of the Russian emperor in foreign countries.'

PRINCE GORTSCHAKOFF'S DESPATCH.

'Les journaux russes ont rendu compte des dernières opérations militaires exécutées par un détachement de nos troupes, dans les régions de l'Asie centrale, avec un succès remarquable et des résultats importants.

'Il était à prévoir que ces événements exciteraient d'autant plus l'attention du public étranger qu'ils se passent dans des contrées à peine connues.

'Notre auguste maître m'a ordonné de vous exposer succinctement, mais avec clarté et précision, la position qui nous est faite dans l'Asie centrale, les intérêts qui servent de mobile à notre action dans ces contrées, et le but final que nous y poursuivons.

'La position de la Russie dans l'Asie centrale est celle de tous les États civilisés qui se trouvent en contact avec des peuplades à demi sauvages, errantes, sans organisation sociale fixe.

'Il arrive toujours, en pareil cas, que l'intérêt de la sécurité des frontières et celui des relations de commerce exigent que l'État plus civilisé exerce un certain ascendant sur des voisins que leurs mœurs nomades et turbulentes rendent fort incommodes.

'On a d'abord des incursions et des pillages à réprimer. Pour y mettre un terme, on est forcé de réduire à une soumission plus ou moins directe les peuplades limitrophes.

'Une fois ce résultat atteint, celles-ci prennent des habitudes plus tranquilles. Mais elles se trouvent à leur tour exposées aux aggressions des tribus plus éloignées. L'État est obligé de les défendre contre ces déprédations et de châtier ceux qui les commettent. De là la nécessité d'expéditions lointaines, coûteuses, périodiques, contre un ennemi que son organisation sociale rend insaisissable. Si l'on se borne à châtier les pillards et qu'on se retire, la leçon s'efface bientôt, la retraite est mise sur le compte de la faiblesse ; les peuples asiatiques en particulier ne respectent que la force visible et palpable ; la force morale de la raison et des intérêts de la civilisation n'a point encore de prise sur eux. La tâche est donc toujours à recommencer.

'Pour couper court à ces désordres permanents, on établit quelques points fortifiés parmi les populations ennemies ; on exerce sur elles un ascendant qui, peu à peu, les réduit à une soumission plus ou moins forcée.

'Mais au-delà de cette seconde ligne, d'autres peuplades plus éloignées encore viennent bientôt provoquer les mêmes dangers et les mêmes répressions.

'L'État se trouve donc dans l'alternative ou d'abandonner ce travail incessant et de livrer ses frontières à des désordres perpétuels qui y rendent toute prospérité, toute sécurité, toute civilisation impossibles, ou bien d'avancer de plus en plus dans les profondeurs de contrées sauvages où, à chaque pas qu'il accomplit, les distances accroissent les difficultés et les charges auxquelles il s'expose.

'Tel a été le sort de tous les pays qui ont été placés dans les mêmes

conditions, les États-Unis en Amérique, la France en Algérie, la Hollande dans ses colonies, l'Angleterre aux Indes ; tous ont été inévitablement entraînés à suivre cette marche progressive où l'ambition a moins de part que l'impérieuse nécessité, et où la plus grande difficulté consiste à savoir s'arrêter.

'C'est aussi la raison qui a conduit le gouvernement impérial à s'établir d'abord d'un côté sur la Syr-Daria, de l'autre sur le lac Issyk-Koul, et à consolider ces deux lignes par des forts avancés qui, peu à peu, ont pénétré au cœur de ces régions lointaines, sans cependant parvenir à établir au-delà la tranquillité indispensable à la sécurité de nos frontières.

'La cause de cette instabilité résida d'abord dans le fait qu'entre les points extrêmes de cette double ligne il y a un immense espace inoccupé où les invasions des tribus pillardes continuent à paralyser toute colonisation et tout commerce par caravanes ; ensuite dans les fluctuations perpétuelles de la situation politique de ces contrées où le Turkestan et le Kokand, tantôt réunis, tantôt séparés, toujours en guerre, soit entre eux, soit avec la Boukharie, n'offraient aucune possibilité de relations fixes ni de transactions régulières quelconques.

'Le gouvernement impérial s'est donc vu placé malgré lui dans l'alternative que nous avons indiquée, c'est-à-dire ou de laisser se perpétuer un état de désordre permanent qui paralyse toute sécurité et tout progrès, ou de se condamner à des expéditions coûteuses et lointaines sans aucun résultat pratique et qu'il faut toujours recommencer, ou enfin d'entrer dans la voie indéfinie de conquêtes et d'annexions qui a conduit l'Angleterre à l'empire des Indes, en cherchant à soumettre l'un après l'autre, par la force des armes, les petits États indépendants dont les mœurs pillardes et turbulentes et les perpétuelles révoltes ne laissent à leurs voisins ni trève ni repos.

'Ni l'une ni l'autre de ces alternatives ne répondait au but que s'est tracé la politique de notre auguste maître, et qui est non d'étendre hors de toute proportion raisonnable les contrées soumises à son sceptre, mais d'y asseoir sa domination sur des bases solides, d'en garantir la sécurité et d'y développer l'organisation sociale, le commerce, le bien-être et la civilisation.

'Notre tâche était donc de rechercher un système propre à atteindre ce triple but.

'A cet effet, les principes suivants ont été posés :—

'1° Il a été jugé indispensable que les deux lignes fortifiées de nos frontières, l'une partant de la Chine jusqu'au lac Issyk-Koul, l'autre partant de la mer d'Aral le long de la Syr-Daria, fussent réunies par des points fortifiés, de manière à ce que tous nos postes fussent à même

de se soutenir mutuellement et ne laissassent aucun intervalle par où pussent s'effectuer impunément les invasions et les déprédations des tribus nomades.

'2° Il était essentiel que la ligne ainsi complétée de nos forts avancés fût située dans une contrée assez fertile non-seulement pour assurer leurs approvisionnements, mais aussi pour faciliter la colonisation régulière, qui seule peut préparer au pays occupé un avenir de stabilité et de prospérité, en gagnant à la vie civilisée les peuplades avoisinantes.

'3° Enfin, il était urgent de fixer cette ligne d'une manière définitive, afin d'échapper aux entraînements dangereux et presque inévitables qui, de répressions en représailles, pouvaient aboutir à une extension illimitée.

'Dans ce but, il fallait poser les bases d'un système fondé non-seulement sur la raison, qui peut être élastique, mais sur les conditions géographiques et politiques, qui sont fixes et permanentes.

'Ce système nous était indiqué par un fait très-simple résultant d'une longue expérience, c'est-à-dire que les tribus nomades qu'on ne peut ni saisir ni châtier, ni contenir efficacement, sont pour nous le voisinage le plus incommode, et que, par contre, les populations agricoles et commerçantes, fixées au sol et dotées d'un organisme social plus développé, nous offrent la chance d'un voisinage tolérable et de relations perfectibles.

'La ligne de nos frontières devait donc englober les premières, elle devait s'arrêter à la limite des secondes.

'Ces trois principes donnent l'explication claire, naturelle et logique des dernières opérations militaires accomplies dans l'Asie centrale.

'En effet, la ligne primitive de nos frontières le long de la Syr-Daria jusqu'au fort Pérovsky d'un côté, et de l'autre jusqu'au lac Issyk-Koul, avait l'inconvénient d'être presque à la limite du désert. Elle était interrompue sur un immense espace entre les deux points extrêmes ; elle n'offrait pas assez de ressources à nos troupes et laissait en dehors des tribus sans cohésion avec lesquelles nulle stabilité n'était possible.

'Malgré notre répugnance à donner à nos frontières une plus grande étendue, ces motifs ont été assez puissants pour déterminer le gouvernement impérial à établir la continuité de cette ligne entre le lac Issyk-Koul et la Syr-Daria, en fortifiant la ville de Tchemkend, récemment occupée par nous.

'En adoptant cette ligne nous obtenons un double résultat : d'un côté, la contrée qu'elle embrasse est fertile, boisée, arrosée par de nombreux cours d'eau ; elle est habitée en partie par des tribus Kirghises qui ont déjà reconnu notre domination ; elle offre donc des éléments favorables à la colonisation et à l'approvisionnement de nos garnisons. De l'autre, elle nous donne pour voisins immédiats les populations fixes, agricoles et commerçantes du Kokand.

'Nous nous trouvons en face d'un milieu social plus solide, plus compacte, moins mobile, mieux organisé ; et cette considération marque avec une précision géographique la limite où l'intérêt et la raison nous prescrivent d'arriver et nous commandent de nous arrêter, parce que, d'une part, toute extension ultérieure de notre domination rencontrant désormais non plus des milieux inconstants comme les tribus nomades, mais des États plus régulièrement constitués, exigerait des efforts considérables et nous entraînerait, d'annexion en annexion, dans des complications infinies ; et que, d'autre part, ayant désormais pour voisins de pareils États, malgré leur civilisation arriérée et l'instabilité de leur condition politique, nous pouvons néanmoins assurer que des relations régulières pourront un jour se substituer, pour l'avantage commun, aux désordres permanents qui ont paralysé jusqu'ici l'essor de ces contrées.

'Tels sont, monsieur, les intérêts qui servent de mobile à la politique de notre auguste maître dans l'Asie centrale, tel est le but final que les ordres de Sa Majesté Impériale ont tracé à l'action de son cabinet.

'Vous êtes invité à puiser dans ces considérations le sens des explications que vous fournirez au gouvernement auprès duquel vous êtes accrédité, si vous êtes interpellé ou si vous voyez s'accréditer des suppositions erronées quant à notre action dans ces contrées lointaines.

'Je n'ai pas besoin d'insister sur l'intérêt évident que la Russie a à ne pas agrandir son territoire, et surtout à ne pas se créer aux extrémités des complications qui ne peuvent que retarder et paralyser son développement intérieur.

'Le programme que je viens de tracer rentre dans cet ordre d'idées.

'Bien souvent, durant les dernières années, on s'est plu à assigner pour mission à la Russie de civiliser les contrées qui l'avoisinent sur le continent asiatique.

'Les progrès de la civilisation n'ont pas d'agent plus efficace que les relations commerciales. Celles-ci, pour se développer, exigent partout l'ordre et la stabilité ; mais en Asie elles reclament une transformation profonde dans les mœurs. Il faut avant tout faire comprendre aux peuples asiatiques qu'il y a plus d'avantage pour eux à favoriser et assurer le commerce des caravanes qu'à les piller.

'Ces notions élémentaires ne peuvent pénétrer dans la conscience publique que là où il y a un public, c'est-à-dire un organisme social et un gouvernement qui le dirige et le représente.

'Nous accomplissons la première partie de cette tâche en portant notre frontière à la limite où se rencontrent ces conditions indispensables.

'Nous accomplirons la seconde en nous attachant désormais à prouver aux États voisins, par un système de fermeté quant à la répression de leurs méfaits, mais en même temps de modération et de justice dans

l'emploi de la force et de respect pour leur indépendance, que la Russie n'est pas leur ennemie, qu'elle ne nourrit à leur égard aucune vue de conquête, et que les relations pacifiques et commerciales avec elle sont plus profitables que le désordre, le pillage, les représailles et la guerre en permanence.

'En se consacrant à cette tâche le cabinet impérial s'inspire des intérêts de la Russie. Il croit servir en même temps les intérêts de la civilisation et de l'humanité. Il a droit de compter sur une appréciation équitable et loyale de la marche qu'il poursuit et des principes qui le guident.

'(Signé) GORTCHAKOF.

'Saint-Pétersbourg, le 21 novembre 1864.'

This manifesto, which professed, as may be seen, to show, in their true light the principles by which Russia's policy in Central Asia was governed, excited a good deal of discussion at the time of its publication, but, except perhaps from the optimist school of English politicians, met with but little credence in Europe. Its appearance was followed up a few months later by an Imperial decree dated February 12, 1865, constituting the new province of Russian Turkestan, (thenceforward to be incorporated in the Russian Empire,) and making provision for its civil and military government. The boundaries of the new province, which stretched southwards as far as the northern bank of the Arys (a tributary of the Syr-Daria) were also defined, but were adhered to for so short a time, that it would be useless to describe them more closely here. With regard to the circular letter quoted above, it is both possible and probable that the Russian Government may have been quite honest in its avowal of a desire to hold its hand, and to allow the policy of annexation to remain in abeyance for a time, so as to give leisure to consolidate the newly-acquired province; but unfortunately such good intentions were hardly likely to obtain much credence with the Kokandians, one of whose chief cities, Chemkend, had just been wrested from them.

Naturally enough, they continued to be animated with the most hostile spirit towards the Russians, and seem to have been quite determined not to leave their opponents unmolested in their new quarters. Nothing, however, worthy of note occurred till the spring of 1865, when, according to the Russian accounts, the Kokandians were again the aggressors. It appears that the two States of Bokhara and Kokand had for some time previously been at war, and were carrying on a series of desultory hostilities with each other, in which the forces of the latter State had generally been worsted. In the beginning of April 1865, the Bokharian army, according to the general routine of their campaigns, invaded Kokand, and took possession of Khodjend, gaining at the same time a signal victory over the Kokandians. The Russian general Cherniayeff, who was at Chemkend, had thus two armies, both of which might be supposed to be equally hostile, in the neighbourhood of his frontier line, viz. the victorious Bokharian, and the defeated Kokandian army. The intentions of the former were quite uncertain, and there was good reason to fear that the Bokharian troops, flushed with their recent victory, and excited by the fanatical preachings of their moollahs, would probably make an incursion into Russian territory. In order, therefore, to be prepared for any contingency of this sort, General Cherniayeff, as a precautionary measure, sent out a 'corps of observation' from Chemkend in the direction of Tashkend, which was about seventy-five miles distant. What the strength of this corps was, I have not been able to ascertain, but judging from previous campaigns, and the small number of troops with which former successes had been achieved, it was probably not more than from 1,500 to 2,000 men at the most. On May 9, the Russians encamped near a Kokandian fort named Niaz Beg, and while they were there they were suddenly attacked by a strong Kokandian

force, which happened to be in the neighbourhood. Though taken by surprise, the Russians defeated their opponents with a severe loss, and finally stormed and captured the fort Niaz Beg. The Kokandian commander-in-chief, named Alim Kul, who was also regent of the State during the minority of the Khan, Sultan Sahib, was at this time, with the main body of his army, marching along the right bank of the Syr-Daria, with the intention of attacking the Bokharian army in the rear, which was encamped on the left or southern bank of the said river. When he heard of the defeat of his detachment at Niaz Beg, he diverted his attention for a time from the Bokharians, and determined to attack the Russian 'corps of observation.' He thought, no doubt, that with the large force at his command he would have no difficulty in crushing the small detachment of his opponents. In accordance with this resolve, on May 21, he attacked the Russian camp, which had not been moved from its former position, but after an obstinate fight, he was defeated and killed, while 300 of his followers were also left dead upon the field. The Russian losses, as usual, were quite insignificant, as their superiority in artillery enabled them to inflict great loss upon the Kokandians, while they suffered but little themselves.

It would naturally have been expected that General Cherniayeff, after so signal a victory, would have lost no time in following up his success, and in attacking Tashkend at once. He remained, however, inactive before that city for nearly five weeks, and he appears to have been fully justified in doing so, as will be seen from the following explanation. The then ruler of Tashkend was a Kokandian chief who had forcibly taken possession of the place. A numerous and powerful party within the walls, representing the interests of the mercantile community, wished to rid themselves of his yoke, and with that view had invited the Russians to take possession of the town. General Chernia-

yeff, it is averred by the Russian accounts, being averse to further conquest, was at first unwilling to entertain the project. It is more probable, however, that he did not wish to storm a town, a great portion of the inhabitants of which were anxious to be taken under Russian protection. He had, moreover, good reason to believe that by the intrigues of the revolutionary party inside (who, it is said, were prepared to rise and expel the Kokandian garrison) the city would soon fall into his hands without his having to fight for it. He was therefore content to wait. Unforeseen events, however, forced him to immediate action. The revolutionary party in Tashkend, misinterpreting the reluctance of the Russians to take the town, grew impatient at their delay; and thinking that they had trusted to a broken reed in them, now sent a similar invitation to the Bokharian army at Khodjend. On hearing this, Cherniayeff, who had no intention of letting the town slip through his hands, resolved to anticipate the Bokharians, and take it by storm. The assault was delivered on the night of June 26–7, 1865, and, after an obstinate defence, Tashkend was captured.

Such was the Russian version of the course of events that led to the capture of this important place. Shortly after its occupation, by way of keeping up the story of the reluctant occupation of the city, a proclamation was issued by the Governor of Orenburg, which stated that the Russian troops would only garrison it for a short time, till the danger threatening its independence was passed.*

With the fall of Tashkend vanished the last remnant of the independence of Kokand. Situated on the right bank of

* In the following year the city was incorporated in the Russian Empire, at the request, it was affirmed, of the inhabitants. General Kryjanovski, in a proclamation dated Tashkend, August 27, 1866, announced the fact of its annexation.

the Chirchik, in an angle of land caused by the Syr-Daria changing its course, and taking a bend from a westerly to a north-westerly direction, Tashkend was the only important place between the rivers Chui and the Syr-Daria that had not been brought under Russian rule. Its possession was commercially of considerable importance to Russia, owing to the fact that several of the great trade routes of Central Asia leading from Russia and Siberia unite at Chemkend and thence form one road running in a south-easterly direction through Tashkend on to Samarkand and Bokhara. It is thus a great centre of traffic. In Russian eyes, however, the position of the city held out the prospect of still greater advantages than these. By all the other principal routes from the line of the Syr-Daria to Samarkand and Bokhara, the inhospitable deserts of the Kizil Kum and the Kara Kum had to be traversed; but the road through Tashkend from the north, after emerging from the steppes north of the Syrdaria, which cannot be avoided, possessed the merit of not running through the desert at any point of its course, but passed through a succession of river valleys, first along that of the Syr-Daria, and then along that of the Zarafshan almost to the very walls of Samarkand.*

Up to this period the Ameer of Bokhara, sheltered by the broad waterless steppes of the Kizil Kum and Batak Kum, had felt himself tolerably secure against the encroachments of his dreaded northern neighbour; but when Tashkend came into Russian possession, he was not slow to perceive that the flank of his natural defence had been turned, and that a comparatively easy road, viâ Khodjend, Oratepe, and Djuzak, lay open to the walls of his capital. In addition to this he claimed some rights of sovereignty over parts of the khanate of Kokand (which he was even then seeking to enforce by

* 'Trade Routes of Central Asia,' Russian 'Nautical Magazine,' July 1862.

arms), in which Tashkend was included, and he had been preparing to take advantage of the invitation sent to him by the inhabitants of that city. When, therefore, he found that his army, which still continued to occupy Khodjend, had been anticipated in taking possession of Tashkend by the Russians, he was highly incensed at the loss of so important a post, and determined to revenge, if he could, the insult offered to him. Accordingly, in July (1865), about a month after the capture of Tashkend, he demanded of Cherniayeff the evacuation of the town, and threatened, in case of non-compliance with his demand, to rouse up all the Mahomedans of Central Asia into a general crescentade against Russia. The Russian commander was, however, not disposed to recognise the rights of the Ameer over what might once have been Bokharian or Kokandian, but which was now Russian territory. The demand, therefore, met with a flat refusal. Simultaneously with the despatch of this message, the Ameer reinforced his army in Kokand, and on receipt of Cherniayeff's reply seized a Russian caravan which happened to be in his territories, and threw the merchants into prison. Upon this the Governor of Orenburg retaliated by ordering all the Bokharian merchants in the government and town of Orenburg to be imprisoned and their goods to be confiscated. This brought the Ameer to his senses, and the Russian merchants were released. Some correspondence seems now to have ensued between the Ameer and Cherniayeff, after which, about the end of September, an envoy of the Ameer, Imam Hadjee by name, appeared at Tashkend. The ostensible object of his mission was to arrange matters amicably, and to assure the Russian commander of the friendly disposition of his master towards the Russians. At the same time he complained that the Ameer was much aggrieved that no Russian officers had done him the honour to visit his capital; and as an inducement to compliance with this

suggestion, the envoy took advantage of the relative positions of England and Russia in Asia to hint at a recent visit of other envoys to Bokhara, who had come by way of Affghanistan, and who had submitted to his master proposals hostile to Russian interests.*

Won over by these overtures and representations, and desirous, it may be, of counteracting the intrigues of these fabulous envoys, Cherniayeff consented to send a scientific and diplomatic mission under M. Struve to Bokhara, and instructed its members to explain to the Ameer the terms on which friendly relations would be resumed. The members of the mission, who were four in number, were at first well received by the Ameer. About the commencement of December, however, all communications from them to Russian head-quarters at Tashkend ceased, and rumours soon reached that city to the effect that the Russian envoys, together with all Russian subjects who happened to be in Bokharian territory, had been seized and imprisoned, and that their property had been confiscated. As the Russian general still received no news from his envoys, on December 7 he asked for an explanation, and demanded that his envoys should be allowed to return at once. In reply he received a haughty message to the effect that their detention was in retaliation for the Russian authorities at Orenburg having some short time previously refused to allow a Bokharian envoy to proceed to St. Petersburg, and the Ameer further announced his intention of continuing to detain the Russian officers as hostages for the safe return of his own ambassador. Cherniayeff, after some fruitless protestations, finding that he could not obtain the release of his envoys, determined to have recourse to arms. Accordingly, on January 30, 1866, he marched out of Tashkend with fourteen companies of infantry, six sotnias of Cossacks,

* This was, it need hardly be said, a pure fabrication.

fourteen guns, and a commissariat equipped with provisions for a month. Crossing the Syr-Daria at Fort Chinaz, he marched in the direction of Djuzak, with the avowed intention of going on to Bokhara, and effecting the release of his envoys by force. The Russian column encountered no obstacle until, on February 4, they arrived within four or five miles of Djuzak, where the enemy appear to have been posted in considerable force. At this juncture Cherniayeff received a letter from the Ameer of Bokhara, stating that the Russian officers had been released and would arrive at Samarkand the following day. There was no truth in this statement, but it enabled the Ameer to delay Cherniayeff's advance, and so gain a little time. Meanwhile firewood and forage began to run short in the Russian camp, and as none was obtainable by purchase from the inhabitants of Djuzak, a foraging party was sent out with instructions to take what was required by force, but to avoid, if possible, any collision with the enemy. The Bokharian troops, however, attacked this force, which was obliged to retreat with a loss of some few killed and wounded. As Cherniayeff was now with his force in a desert region, in want of wood and forage, and with provisions for only a limited time, his position was somewhat critical, and it became necessary that he should extricate himself without delay, either by an advance on to Samarkand or by a retreat to the Syr-Daria. As there appeared to be no prospect of the return of his envoys, and as he did not feel himself strong enough to attack the forces by which he was confronted, he chose the latter alternative. On February 11 he began his retreat, and though threatened *en route* by swarms of Bokharian cavalry, who harassed his rear and flanks, he reached the left bank of the above river without further mishap on February 14. It was stated at the time that the Czar, on hearing of these events, expressed strong displeasure at his officers having so far exceeded their

The Bokharians are said to have left 1,000 dead upon the field, while the Russian losses, owing, it is said, to the precision of their artillery fire, were utterly insignificant.

The signal defeat at Irdjar was a heavy blow to the cause of the Ameer of Bokhara, who is said on this occasion to have commanded in person. Owing to the dispersion of the flower of his troops by such a comparatively very small Russian force, the prestige that had hitherto attached itself to his name throughout Central Asia was shattered to the ground, and the delusion of his invincibility utterly dispelled.

Following up this signal success, General Romanovski advanced up the left bank of the Syr-Daria, and on May 14 took possession of Nau. This place, situated at the junction of the roads from Khodjend and Kokand to Bokhara, and therefore a point of some strategic importance, was surrendered to him without striking a blow. From hence the Russian forces advanced to Khodjend, which place was reached on May 17. Khodjend, a large and populous city, is situated on the left bank of the Syr-Daria, on the frontiers of Bokhara and Kokand, and through it there runs the only road communicating between the capitals of those two countries. Its position, coupled with the strength of its fortress, which was renowned through Central Asia, rendered it strategically and commercially a most important point. Its possession (like Peshawur in old times between the Sikhs and the Affghans) was often a bone of contention between Kokand and Bokhara; and at times the inhabitants seem to have succeeded in asserting a temporary independence of their own. At this time it was, as stated before, occupied by Bokharian troops. The Russians found it surrounded by a high, thick, double line of walls, and the garrison had made every preparation for its defence. After a week spent in making regular approaches, and in bombardments, General Romanovski determined, on May 24, to storm the place. The

operation was completely successful, and before nightfall the citadel and all the principal streets were in possession of the Russian columns. The following morning the whole of the town surrendered at discretion. As usual in the Russian campaigns in Central Asia, there seems to have been an enormous disproportion between the losses on each side. More than 2,500 of the garrison are said to have been slain, while the Russian loss was only five killed and 122 wounded!

The capture of Khodjend seems to have brought the Ameer to reason, and the Russian envoys, whose detention had been the primary cause of hostilities, were released, and returned in safety to Russian head-quarters.

It might have been thought, perhaps, that the Russians having now annexed a large strip of territory in the valley of the Syr-Daria, over which the Ameer of Bokhara had claims, and having avenged General Cherniayeff's retreat from Djuzak, and obtained the release of the Russian envoys, might well have rested satisfied with their success, and it is not easy to gather from the Russian accounts what were even the ostensible reasons alleged for the continuance of the war. It was asserted by the official press that the Ameer still contumaciously refused to relinquish his claims on the Kokandian territory that had now passed into Russian possession, and that he still maintained a hostile and threatening attitude. If this was actually the case, it might, indeed, have necessitated the maintenance by the Russians of a defensive attitude on their newly-extended frontier, but could scarcely with any show of reason be alleged for invading the State of Bokhara. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that for the next few months immediately subsequent to the capture of Khodjend there was a temporary cessation of hostilities, during which time embassies arrived from Bokhara and Kokand with offers of peace, but their negotiations led to no peaceful results.

In September 1866, the Governor-General of Orenburg, in consequence, it was said, of the menacing attitude still maintained by the Bokharians, ordered General Romanovski to make preparations to advance upon and to attack Ura Tiupia, which is situated a little to the west of Khodjend, to the north of the Kashgar Dakan mountains. In obedience to these instructions, on September 20, the Russian general marched from Khodjend with about 2,500 infantry, 600 cavalry, and 28 guns. The force was equipped with provisions for a month, and with an efficient transport train. On the 22nd, having arrived within eight miles of Ura Tiupia, a reconnaissance of the place was made. After a week had been spent in preliminary operations, two breaches were made in the walls, and at daybreak on October 2 the fort was stormed. After a stout resistance on the part of the garrison, the walls were carried by escalade, and the citadel was captured. An immense quantity of artillery, ammunition, and arms of all sorts fell into the hands of the victors, who seem to have suffered more severely here than in any former engagement.

Djuzak, which is situated on the road to Samarkand, soon shared the fate of Ura Tiupia* and Khodjend, as it was stormed and captured on October 18. It is stated to have been garrisoned by 10,000 men, to have been armed with 53 guns, and to have been altogether the strongest fortress that the Russians had yet encountered in Central Asia. And yet, according to their own account, they assaulted this stronghold, and took it by storm, with a loss of only six men killed and less than 100 wounded, while the losses of the Bokharians are put at 6,000 men! In this case, as in the other accounts of the capture of these fortresses in Turkestan, it is hard to believe that either the strength of the opposing forces, or the losses on each side,

* This place is also written 'Oratepe' in some maps.

can be even approximately correct, as stated in the 'Invalide Russe' and the 'Journal de St.-Pétersbourg.' Even if it be admitted that the Bokharian troops must be the most cowardly and disorganised rabble in the world, yet the idea of a storming column assaulting a fort defended by 10,000 fanatical Mahomedans, who are not generally cowards, and who were sheltered behind walls, and losing only six men killed in the operation, while the assailants kill 6,000 of the defenders, is too preposterous to be for a moment believed. Soon after the capture of Djuzak the fort of Yani Kurgan, which may be described as an outpost of Djuzak, was occupied by Russian troops.* The Ameer of Bokhara was now glad to sue for peace, negotiations for which were commenced in the end of the year 1866, although, as will be seen hereafter, a treaty was not finally ratified without another appeal to arms.

During the following year, the frontier line of the Russian and Bokharian territory remained fixed, and there was no outward material change in the relations of the two Governments. This period was spent by the Russian officials in organising the internal administration of the newly-acquired province, and in strengthening the military position on the new frontier.

In order more clearly to understand subsequent events, it will be necessary here to glance at the state of affairs in Bokhara generally, where disruption appears to have threatened the State from within and from without. The Ameer of Bokhara, in consequence of the defeats sustained in 1865 and 1866 by his troops, in their contests with the Russians,

* The details of the military operations narrated in this chapter have not been given *in extenso*, as it is to be feared they would prove somewhat tedious to the general reader. The accounts of the capture of each place are much alike, and are not of any interest in a military or strategical point of view.

had lost much of his authority and prestige among his people. The Begs, or chieftains, of the various provinces who had trembled before Nasr Ullah, the father of the reigning prince, Muzaffar, were not slow to profit by the discomfiture of his son, and throwing off their allegiance, set themselves up as independent rulers of the provinces entrusted to their care. One of these chieftains, Djoura Beg by name, went so far as openly to defy his suzerain, and gave all who were hostile to him an asylum at his court. Other subjects of the Ameer likewise were estranged from him by the general maladministration of the country, the increased taxation, and his want of success against the Russians; the close neighbourhood of the latter, who had established themselves by this time in the heart of the kingdom, and the fact of war with them being at any time likely to break out afresh, forced him to maintain a large army, and greatly to increase his expenditure. But the troops whom he maintained at this heavy cost had been time after time defeated, and the competition created by the ever-increasing importation of Russian goods into Tashkend, materially diminished one of the principal sources of his revenue. Thus hampered for money, the Ameer was forced on two occasions, during 1867, to apply to the merchants for assistance. Though the necessity of defending his country against the threatened inroads of the infidels was a sufficiently valid plea for this step, and though the merchants were allowed to fix among themselves the sums that each should contribute, these measures naturally did not tend to increase the public contentment. These two contributions, however, did not suffice to meet the wants of the royal exchequer, and a third tribute was contemplated by the Government. The Ameer was proceeding to raise it, but his advisers counselled him to resort to a different measure, viz., that he should first buy up the coin called *tengu*, and then declare it to be twice its real value. Acting on their suggestions, he published a

series of arbitrary decrees, by which the value of the coin was alternately lowered and raised according to the wants of the exchequer. He profited of course for a time by these measures, but the people suffered greatly, and his credit naturally sank to zero. As a crowning sin in the eyes of his subjects, the Ameer appropriated for secular objects the money set apart for religious instruction, and entrusted to the priests for that purpose. This of course drew upon him the enmity of the entire priesthood. Meanwhile commerce flagged, and the people of the country were everywhere plundered and impoverished by the rebellious chiefs, under the pretext of raising funds to defray the expenses of the anticipated struggle with the Russians. At length, when discontent had risen to its highest pitch, the Ameer was accused of having been the first to flee at the battle of Irdjar. This was adduced by the moollahs, and fanatics, whose name is legion in that land of fanaticism, as a proof that he was indifferent to the interests of Islam. Some of his advisers urged him, as a means of vindicating his character from the charge, to make war to the knife with the Russians, and assured him that God would never suffer the followers of the Prophet to be worsted by infidels.

The merchants and other classes of the people, less blinded by fanaticism, were not so eager to renew the contest, but they felt that anything would be preferable to the existing state of anarchy and misery, and were, on the whole, not unfavourable to the resumption of the war. But the Ameer found that it was as difficult to renew the war with the Russians as to keep at peace with them. In the event of a renewal of hostilities, the chances were greatly in favour of his being defeated; and in that case matters would fare far worse with him and his people than ever, and his own life would not be safe from fanatics. On the other hand, he would have been glad enough to keep at peace and sign the treaty required of

him by the Russian Government; but neither he nor his subjects could brook the idea of the hereditary champion of the faith being not only defeated by the infidels, but obliged to set his hand and seal to the acknowledgment of the fact. The dread of public opinion, moreover, made him loth to ratify the proposed treaty, inasmuch as the increased taxation, which had been laid upon the people for the express purpose of enabling him to defray the expenses of the anticipated contest with the infidels, pledged him in a manner to renew the struggle. Placed in this dilemma, he seems to have determined, *more Asiatico*, on a tortuous line of policy, in order both to gain time, and to satisfy the demands both of his own people and the Russians. Meanwhile he solicited aid from all the neighbouring States.

When affairs were in this state the Governor-General of Orenburg, in September 1867, availed himself of the return of the Ameer of Bokhara's envoy from Orenburg to Bokhara, to acquaint him with the required conditions of peace. The Governor of Turkestan, General Kaufman, likewise soon after sent the Ameer a letter containing the same terms, and intimated that he was empowered by his Imperial master to conduct with him the negotiation of the treaty. Added to this was a request that the draft treaty which the Ameer had already received from Orenburg should, as soon as ratified, be returned to Tashkend, whither the Governor intended to go in the following November.

General Kaufman arrived at Tashkend from Vernoë on November 19, but the expected envoy from Bokhara had not made his appearance. News, however, had arrived that predatory bands, despatched by two of the Begs of the province of Bokhara, were making incursions into the Djuzak territory, and that they had captured and sent as prisoners to the capital a Russian officer and three soldiers After the lapse of a month, an envoy, named Mirachur

Moosa Beg, arrived at Tashkend with a letter from the Ameer, in which he acknowledged the receipt of the Governor-General of Orenburg's letter, and expressed approval of the conditions of peace therein named. When asked for the copy of the treaty ratified by the Ameer, the envoy pretended ignorance of it, and declared that no such document had been entrusted to him. He was accordingly requested by General Kaufman to beg the Ameer to return the treaty, ratified as promised in his letter, and also to surrender the Russian officer and three men, of whom mention has already been made. Moosa Beg promised speedy compliance with these demands, but weeks passed, couriers went and came, and no ratification was forthcoming. For the next two months, in fact, Moosa Beg employed every artifice in his power to delay a definite settlement being made. Day after day he assured the Russian Governor that the treaty would be forthcoming, that it was accidentally delayed, &c. &c. In short, he promised everything and systematically did nothing. At length, in the middle of March 1868, when all his subterfuges were exhausted, General Kaufman proposed that he should return to Bokhara, and explain to the Ameer in person that it was necessary that a copy of the treaty, when ratified, should be placed in Russian hands; at the same time he entrusted him with the following letter:—

'I transmit to your Highness through Mirachur Moosa Beg two copies of the treaty, communicated to you from Orenburg. Both are signed and sealed by me. If your Highness is sincerely desirous to live in peace and amity with us, you need only return one of these copies, having previously attached to it your seal as a mark of approval. The other copy, ratified by me, will remain in your hands to guide your resolves, and calm any apprehensions that may still be entertained by your people. As soon as this exchange is

completed, your subjects need dread no continuation of war, but may confidently devote themselves to the business of peace and commerce so profitable to them. On the day I receive one of the above copies, confirmed by your seal, peace between Russia and Bokhara will be regarded as concluded and ratified. The terms set forth in the treaty will then be strictly carried out.' *

The letter concluded by saying, that in the event of the Russian conditions being rejected, General Kaufman would have to be guided exclusively by the interests of the province entrusted to him. Shortly after the despatch of this letter, news was brought from the south-western frontier that lawless bands were multiplying in every direction, invading Russian territory and plundering Russian subjects. In order to put a stop to these incursions, in March 1868, a force of 500 Cossacks was ordered to the frontier. At the same time, in a letter dated March 26, intimation was sent to the Ameer, that although the Russian force on the frontier had been reinforced, it was only a defensive measure, undertaken to protect Russian subjects from plunder. General Kaufman informed the Ameer that a detachment would be sent to the northern slope of the Nura Tau range, in order to choose a site for a new fort within their proposed frontier, as settled by the terms of the treaty submitted to the Ameer, and which was awaiting his ratification. The proposed site of this new fort, it may be observed, was north-west of Samarkand, and almost equidistant between that city and Bokhara. Samarkand would therefore, by this measure (as Djuzak was on the north-east), have been half-encircled by Russian posts. The progress of the Russian column sent out for this purpose was opposed at

* See Berlin correspondent of the 'Times,' June 17, 1868, whose translation of the account given in the 'Invalide Russe' I have here adopted.

the village of Uchum by the now semi-independent Begs of Chulak and Kette Kurgan, whose troops were beaten and put to flight; though pursuit, it is said, was not extended beyond the Russian frontier. The Governor of Turkestan informed the Ameer at once of what had occurred, and drew his attention to the fact, that inasmuch as this skirmish had taken place within the Russian frontiers, it was merely a defensive, and not an offensive measure. At the same time he renewed his request for the ratification of the treaty. It may be remarked that it is evident, even from the Russian account, that measures were taken for the erection of this fort in the heart of the Bokhara State before the proposed treaty had been finally concluded. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bokharians, seeing in this act nothing but a fresh encroachment, should have resisted the selection of a site for a fort in the midst of their territory, and which, from its position, would be a direct menace to Bokhara and Samarkand. On April 6, 1868, another envoy of the king arrived at Tashkend from Bokhara, ostensibly to have some of the clauses of the proposed treaty explained to him. This envoy, whose name was Sham-ed-din, pursued precisely the same course of duplicity with regard to the treaty and its ratification as his predecessor Moosa Beg had done, raising objections and causing delays, yet constantly holding out hopes of a speedy and pacific settlement. The treaty, with the required clauses explained, was once more returned to Bokhara for ratification. Meanwhile, the position of the Ameer among his subjects was becoming more and more critical and embarrassing. As time went on, and the proceeds of the increased taxation flowed into the public exchequer, it became a sort of duty to him to engage in the holy war, to defray the expenses of which the new taxes had been imposed. This rendered the Ameer more unwilling than ever to sign the treaty with the Russians.

Great stress was laid by the Russian journals on the extreme forbearance displayed by the Governor of Turkestan towards the Ameer during these negotiations, and upon his anxiety to make every allowance, consistent with the interests of the Russian Government, for the difficult position in which he was placed. Determined, it is alleged, to avoid hostilities if he could, the Governor resolved to give him ample time to sign the treaty, and forbore to make him responsible for the hostile incursions of his rebellious subjects.

The Ameer, though goaded on by the priests to declare the holy war, put it off from one holy festival to another, declaring on each occasion that the next would be the most favourable for its commencement. Losing all patience at length, in the end of April, the priests took advantage of the Ameer's temporary absence from the capital to preach the necessity of an immediate crescentade, and incited the people to such a degree, that they began to talk openly of deposing the Ameer, and placing his son-in-law on the throne. The king was informed of these events by his commander-in-chief, who advised him not to return to Bokhara. Disregarding these counsels, however, he immediately set out for his capital. He was met *en route* by a large and infuriated multitude, who openly taunted him with indifference to the interests of Islam. This incident caused him to change his mind and to set out for Gij Duvan. Everywhere the people assembled around him in excited masses, and numerous anonymous letters were thrown in at the windows of his resting-places at night, threatening him with assassination, if he did not drive out the infidels from his territory. From Gij Duvan he proceeded towards Kermineh, and on his way thither news reached him of the advance of the Russian detachment to the Nura Tau range (of which mention has already been made), and of the defeat of the Bokharians who had opposed its progress. This news, coupled with the

threats and taunts of his people, seemed to have determined the Ameer, after so much vacillation, to adopt a definite course. Accordingly, on his arrival at Kermineh, the holy war was proclaimed. The Bokhara priests, having thus gained their point, flocked to Samarkand, in order to foment the religious enthusiasm against the Russians. A large army, comprising both the regular and irregular troops of the State, was soon assembled there, well primed with fanatical zeal and eager to fight. The King of Bokhara called upon the Khans of Khiva and Kokand to aid him. The former is stated to have declined, but the latter, in whose country the fanatical excitement against the Russians was almost as great as in Bokhara, promised his support, provided the king would first beat the Russians in the open field, and win back Djzuak.

Affairs in the Bokhara State having come to this pass, General Kaufman naturally felt that it would be the height of imprudence to allow the people of Bokhara to be excited against the Russian Government with impunity, and hostilities having been thus forced upon him, he determined to prosecute them with vigour. Accordingly, on April 30, at 4 A.M., he marched from Tasch Kupruck (a stone bridge half-way between Yani Kurgan and Samarkand), to attack the latter city. On nearing the river Zarafshan, the Russian troops found the gardens situated in the valley occupied by the enemy, with whom as they advanced a few shots were exchanged. General Kaufman having been assured by some Samarkand Begs that neither the priests nor the people were in favour of war, sent forward an officer with 100 Cossacks to stop the firing, unless the enemy persisted in their attack. He was, however, received with shots. Having forced the enemy to retire a short distance, General Kaufman ordered the infantry to advance. At this moment one Nazim-ood-deen, who had acted as Bokharian envoy to Russia in 1859, presented himself with a flag of truce, and stated that he had

brought with him the treaty of peace, which had been sent to the Ameer some time ago for ratification, and of which mention has already been made. He requested, therefore, that the troops should be brought to a halt where they were, and that negotiations should be resumed on the spot. General Kaufman did not think fit to accede to this proposition, as the enemy were just then coming up on all sides. The flag of truce, therefore, was given to understand that no negotiations could be entered into till the troops had pitched their camp for the night. On emerging from the gardens into the meadows close to the river, it was seen that the bank opposite was swarming with hostile masses. Placed on a high and steep eminence, they seemed determined to dispute the passage of the river. The stream being deep and rapid, and the enemy numerous, General Kaufman judged it might be difficult to force the passage, and at noon sent for Nazim-ood-deen to tell him that no camp could be pitched, and no negotiations entered upon in presence of the enemy. If, he added, the Ameer was bent on peace, he had better immediately withdraw his troops, or else the heights would be stormed. Meanwhile, 400 Cossacks with four guns had advanced and cleared the country on the right of the Bokharian forces.

It was 2 P.M., and still the messenger despatched by Nazim-ood-deen had not returned. General Kaufman therefore, putting himself again in communication with the envoy, informed him that the attack could no longer be delayed. In reply, he again begged for an hour's more respite, and promised, if it were granted, that he would himself go to his countrymen, and have the army withdrawn. The request was acceded to, and the envoy departed, leaving the draft of the treaty in Russian hands. On examination, it was found that the treaty was not the one that had been sent to the Ameer to be ratified, but an instrument drawn up in the

Persian tongue, and differing materially from the original. Meanwhile the hour expired; the enemy had not only not evacuated the heights, but had begun to fire upon the Russian lines with their artillery. The Russian troops were then placed in line of battle, and advancing to the bank of the Zarafshan, waded across the river (the water of which reached above their waists), and prepared to storm the heights. The Bokharians, however, did not await their onslaught, but fled on seeing them advance. The Russians were too much fatigued to pursue, but found the enemy's artillery deserted on the heights. The character of the fighting on this occasion may be judged from the insignificant casualties sustained by the Russians, which, by their own account, amounted only to two men killed and two officers and twenty-eight men wounded. The inhabitants of Samarkand closed their gates against the Bokharian fugitives, and on the following day sent a deputation to announce the surrender of the city to the Czar of all the Russias. General Kaufman detained some of the deputies, sending back the others to prepare for the reception of the troops; then placing himself at the head of a portion of his troops, and taking the Affghans* with him, the Russian general entered Samarkand on May 2.

* It may as well be explained who these Affghans were. In April 1868, when the Ameer of Bokhara was forced, as has been shown, by his own people into a declaration of war against the Russians, the body of Affghans who had for the last four years served under his standard received orders to march to Nurat. In consequence of the non-receipt of long arrears of pay, the arrest of many of their officers, and the sorry treatment generally which they had received, these Affghans were deeply disaffected, and had conceived a violent hatred of the Bokharians. Finding themselves near the Russian frontier, they crossed it, and their leader, Iskandar (a son of Mahomed Azim Khan), sent a message to the Russian authorities to say that the sorry plight in which he and his retainers found themselves forced them to seek

As soon as the Russians had fairly established themselves in the city, they proceeded to take measures to ensure, as far as possible, the future security of the garrison that was to be left there. In order to effect this object, it was most important to reduce the fort of Kette Kurgan, one of the strongest in the khanate of Bokhara. It is situated about 44 miles from Samarkand, on the Bokhara road, and was occupied by a numerous Bokharian garrison, under the orders of Omar Beg. On May 28, General Kaufman sent a strong column, consisting of fourteen companies of infantry, eight guns, and three sotnias of Cossacks, under Major Golovatchew, with orders to assault and take the place. On hearing of the approach of this force, the garrison evacuated the fort, and on May 30 the Russians entered Kette Kurgan—the inhabitants having, on the previous day, sent their representatives to tender their submission to the Russian commandant. During the six or seven following days there would seem to have been incessant fighting and skirmishing between the Russian and Bokharian forces, and always with the same result—viz., the utter dispersion and route of the latter. Besides the regular forces of the Ameer, numerous irregular bands of marauders continued to assail the Russian forces whenever an opportunity presented itself. Thus, on June 8, at 7 A.M., a Bokharian force approached the Russian camp at Kette Kurgan with the intention of attacking it. Major Golovatchew sent out a force who dispersed their enemy, and utterly routed them. Another force was about the same time sent out, under General

refuge in Russian territory, and place themselves under the protection of the Czar. Some of them were sent on to Tashkend, and the rest remained on the frontier to fight, should opportunity occur, against the Bokharians. This is the Russian version of the story. It is, however, quite as probable that these Affghans would in any case have gone over to the side which they foresaw would win in the conflict which was then imminent.

Abramoff, against some insurgent bands at Karatube, who are said to have numbered some 10,000 men. Again were the Bokharians totally defeated, and pursued with great slaughter. The survivors fled to Shahr-i-Sabz, to Ourgoot, and in other directions. On June 9, General Abramoff returned with his column to Samarkand. Other unsuccessful assaults were also made upon the Russian position at Kette Kurgan. General Kaufman, wearied with this incessant fighting and skirmishing, which harassed his troops to no purpose, was naturally anxious to stamp out as soon as possible all organised opposition. He therefore determined to direct his strength against the main body of the regular forces of the Ameer, which were reported to be posted in force on the heights of Zer-boulak, a point about nine miles to the west of Kette Kurgan, on the road to Kermineh. Accordingly, taking with him ten companies of infantry, three sotnias of Cossacks, and six guns, on June 11 he started from Samarkand *en route* for Zer-boulak. Though harassed throughout his route by swarms of hostile cavalry, General Kaufman reached Kette Kurgan without any appreciable loss, and on June 14 he advanced towards his destination. Arrived at Zer-boulak (where he found that the forces of the Ameer had determined to make a last stand), he immediately commenced his attack, stormed the heights, drove the enemy from their position, and ultimately defeated them with great loss. The whole of their artillery, moreover, fell into his hands. The battle at Zer-boulak was the last occasion upon which the Ameer attempted to withstand the Russians in the field, and the disastrous issue of the conflict probably convinced him of the absolute necessity of making peace with them on the best terms he could get.

It is necessary here to revert to the events that were occurring at Samarkand during the absence of General Kaufman and the main body of his forces.

When that officer marched out of Samarkand on June 11, with the intention, as has been seen, of finally crushing the opposition of the Ameer, he left in the city Major Baron de Stempel, with a somewhat scanty force, consisting of four companies of infantry, a company of sappers, and about 100 artillerymen. In fact, reckoning even the invalids and convalescents, the force left to defend the city did not amount to more than 658 men of all arms. Immediately after the departure of the main body, the garrison took all practicable measures to provide against a sudden attack or surprise by the enemy. The tanks were filled with water, the fortifications were hastily repaired, &c. The Russians soon had cause to congratulate themselves on having taken these timely precautions. The Bokharians, under Djoura Beg, the chief of Shahı-i-Sabz, acting in concert with the inhabitants of the city, thought General Kaufman's absence was a favourable opportunity to regain possession of the citadel. On June 12 the principal officials of the city succeeded, by means of false representations, in inducing the commandant to send out a considerable detachment from the citadel in order to repel a party of the enemy, who were said to be threatening the city. The Bokharians, retreating before the Russians, endeavoured to draw them on to a considerable distance from the walls, in the hope of being able to cut off their retreat, and so further diminish the strength of the garrison. The Russians, however, suspecting the treachery of the Samarkandians, retreated within the citadel. It was fortunate for them that they did so, for within an hour or two after they re-entered it, the enemy, consisting (it is said) of 25,000 Bokharian troops and 15,000 Chinese Kiptchaks (?), entered Samarkand, and were immediately joined by the inhabitants. They marched at once to the citadel, and invested it on all sides. And now there ensued a most desperate struggle between the small belea-

guered garrison and the swarms of their Bokharian foes. Again and again did the latter furiously assault the works, in dense masses, at every available point; and it was only due to their want of unity of action that they did not succeed in their attempts to force their way into the interior of the works. The Russian garrison, hastening from one threatened point to another, knew well that their only chance for their lives was to defend their stronghold to the last, and they fought with all the desperation and energy that such a conviction could inspire. The Bokhara and Samarkand gates were the scenes of a series of the fiercest and most desperate encounters. After the first two days of the siege, 150 men of the garrison were *hors de combat*, and it became impossible for the Russians, owing to the paucity of their numbers, to hold the whole extent of the works. Under these circumstances, the commandant, Baron de Stempel, determined, in case the enemy should succeed in penetrating the citadel, to gather his forces into the palace of the Khan, to defend it to the last, and in case of failure to blow it up, involving the garrison and their enemies in one common destruction. On June 15, the Bokharians, thirsting for the blood of the small beleaguered force, and knowing that their only chance of reducing the citadel was to do so before the return of General Kaufman, redoubled their efforts. The three or four succeeding days, from June 15–19, seem to have been passed in an uninterrupted series of furious assaults and sorties, while a continuous musketry fire raged on both sides. During the whole of this time, however, the Russian garrison, by incredible exertions, succeeded in maintaining their ground.

Meanwhile, as all communication between the beleaguered garrison and General Kaufman was cut off, that officer had received no news from Samarkand. Vague rumours, however, reached him of the state of affairs, and he accordingly began to retrace his steps. *En route*, one of the many mes-

sengers despatched by the Russian commandant in Samarkand succeeded in conveying information to him of the very critical state of the garrison. Making all haste, he arrived at Samarkand on June 20, and speedily changed the aspect of affairs. The siege was raised, and the Bokharian troops, under Djoura Beg, baulked of their prey, and more dispirited than ever, retired to Shahr-i-Sabz. After having thus succoured the garrison, and raised the siege of Samarkand, General Kaufman left a sufficient force there for its protection, and returned himself to Tashkend.

The Ameer of Bokhara, after the utter defeat and dispersion of his army at Zer-boulak, had no alternative but to make peace once more with the Russians. A fresh treaty was accordingly concluded, by virtue of which the latter continued in possession of Kette Kurgan and the adjacent districts, which were to be governed on a plan of 'temporary administration' agreed upon. The Ameer, moreover, undertook to pay a 'contribution' (or, in other words, a tribute) to the Russian Government. With the view of securing the safety of the persons and property of Russian traders within the khanate, and of protecting their commerce generally, the following clauses were inserted in the said treaty :—

'I. All Russian subjects, whatever their religion, are entitled to carry on trade in all parts of Bokhara, the Ameer being obliged to protect their persons, goods, and caravans, within the frontiers of his dominions.

'II. Russian merchants will be entitled to station mercantile agents in all towns of Bokhara.

'III. The duty on Russian goods imported is not to exceed 2½ per cent of their value.

'IV. Russian merchants will be free to cross Bokhara on their way to the neighbouring principalities.'

Seid Muzaffar, the Ameer of Bokhara, soon found that

the difficulties of his position were by no means yet at an end. His eldest son, supported by the priests and the Begs of Shahr-i-Sabz, Djoura Beg and Baba Beg, who were determined to make no peace with the infidels, revolted against his father. Supported by these two chiefs, who promised him help and reinforcements, he proceeded to Karshi, a town about 100 versts almost due south of Samarkand, and proclaimed himself as the reigning sovereign. The Ameer, hearing of this, took the field against the insurgents, and marched against Karshi. Having driven his son out of it, and left a garrison there, he marched against Shahr-i-Sabz, the Begs of which were supporting Katy Turia, and with whom he had taken refuge.

The Ameer got as far as Tchiraktchi; but at this point news reached him that troubles and disorders had broken out in the other extremity of his dominions, to the north-east of Bokhara. This caused him to halt and remain irresolute for some days, after which he fell back upon Karshi, and returned to his capital. The tidings that occasioned his return were to the effect that a chief named Sadyk, instigated by Katy Turia, had taken advantage of the absence of the Ameer to stir up the inhabitants of the northern steppe against their ruler, and had occupied Nourata and Kermineh with bands of insurgents. Katy Turia, as soon as his father retreated to Bokhara, drove out the royal garrison that had been left at Tchiraktchi, and made himself master of the place. Owing to his personal activity, and the assistance he received from the Begs of Shahr-i-Sabz, he soon found himself at the head of a numerous and powerful force. The object of the insurgents was perfectly clear and well defined. Acting in concert with Sadyk in the north-east, Katy Turia purposed to march on the capital, take possession of it, and dethrone his father, Seid Muzaffar. The latter now found himself in a most

embarrassing position. The majority of his subjects, owing to their hatred of the Russians, were disposed to side with his rebellious son, who was looked upon as the head of the anti-Russian party. In short, it appeared that Katy Turia had only to march on Bokhara, in order to seat himself on his father's throne. In this critical position, seeing that there was no time to be lost, the Ameer applied to General Abramoff, the commandant of the Zarafshan district, for assistance, and begged him to interfere.

The unsettled state of affairs in the khanate had reacted most disastrously on the people of the territory around Samarkand lately occupied by the Russian troops. Djoura Beg, one of the rebellious chiefs mentioned above, had already made repeated attempts to pillage the Russian frontier, and to harass the inhabitants of the villages under Russian protection. The Ameer's son, moreover, began to send emissaries into Russian territory, in order to excite the population against Russian rule. Putting aside these acts of provocation, it was for several obvious reasons the interest of Russia that tranquillity under a settled government should prevail in the khanate, and that the actual Ameer should continue to be sovereign of the country. Under these circumstances, General Abramoff resolved to crush any further hostile demonstration of the Ameer's enemies, and to give him all the assistance in his power.

With this view he concentrated an expeditionary force at Djama, ostensibly with the view of advancing against Shahr-i-Sabz. This feint had the desired effect, for the two rebel chiefs of Shahr-i-Sabz, Djoura Beg and Baba Beg, looking upon it as evidence of an intention to advance upon their city, at once evacuated Tchiraktchi, and retreated within their own territory. Katy Turia also fell back upon Karshi, and the greater portion of his troops, dreading the approach of the Russian forces, dispersed. Taking advantage of this

favourable turn of affairs, the Ameer, secured from the attacks of the insurgents in the south by the presence of a Russian force there, at once advanced from Bokhara to the north-east of his kingdom, in order to restore order and re-establish his authority. At Kermineh he encountered and completely defeated the insurgent forces under Sadyk, and placed suitable garrisons in the towns of Kermineh, Natyrtcha, and Nourata. Having thus reasserted his sway in the north-east, he returned to Bokhara. Tranquillity was, however, not yet completely restored, for the population in the south was still disaffected, and Katy Turia, who had, as before mentioned, taken refuge in Karshi, had contrived to reassemble his followers to the number of 8,000 men, and refused to abandon his hostile projects. In order to further these ends, he had entered into negotiations with the Turcomans, and their bands were beginning to threaten the line of communication between Bokhara and Karshi.

During these events the Russian column had remained stationary at Djama, and General Abramoff had resolved to content himself with the moral effect produced by the presence of his force there, and to remain inactive, if possible, while the Ameer re-established order throughout his dominions. In the middle of October 1868, Seid Muzaffar, having settled affairs in the north-east, sent envoys to General Abramoff with presents, to express his gratitude for the services he had rendered him. At the same time he represented to the Russian general that Djoura Beg of Shahr-i-Sabz was the principal cause of his son's obstinately continuing in arms, and he requested that military operations might be directed against the said chief, in order to drive him out of Shahr-i-Sabz. General Abramoff, wishing to adhere to the policy he had adopted, and remain inactive, replied that the Ameer need apprehend no danger from Djoura Beg, as while a Russian force remained at Djama,

he would not dare to leave his possessions in order to help Katy Turia at Karshi; and that, therefore, it was advisable that the Ameer should at once proceed to crush the opposition of his son. The Ameer, however, declared that, without Russian help, he was not in a position to risk any enterprise of the kind. Thereupon, General Abramoff, influenced by the consideration of the disastrous results which were already being produced in the Zarafshan district by the anarchy and disorder that prevailed in the southern possessions of the Ameer, consented to make a diversion in his favour, and employ the Djama column against Karshi. It was therefore arranged that simultaneously with the departure of the Russian column from Djama, the Ameer should also start with his forces from Bokhara, *en route* for Karshi. On November 15 (1868), 10 versts from the above city, the Russian troops, who were in advance of the Ameer's army, encountered the rebels, and after a most insignificant skirmish, Katy Turia took flight, with all his troops, amounting to about 8,000 men, who were pursued for 18 versts by the Cossacks. Two days afterwards, on November 17, another skirmish occurred in the gardens and environs of Karshi itself, against about 4,000 of the rebel troops, who were again utterly routed. The Russians then entered and took possession of the town, which they held till the arrival of the Bokharian troops, four days later (November 21), when it was formally made over by direction of General Abramoff to the Bokharian authorities, and the Russian troops returned to Samarkand. The expulsion of Katy Turia, who was now obliged to seek safety in flight, from Karshi, and its restoration to the Ameer, are stated to have made a great impression upon the inhabitants of the khanate, inasmuch as this act proved to them in the most convincing manner the moderation of Russian policy and aims, and that the Government was by no means desirous of further

annexation and conquest. The chief advantage, however, which was claimed as resulting from General Abramoff's having assisted the Ameer, was that the party which was still violently hostile to Russia, which had placed all its hopes upon Katy Turia, and which looked for a speedy revolution in Bokhara, was now entirely overthrown, and altogether unable to continue the struggle against the Ameer. As far as any accounts have since these events been received in Europe, tranquillity appears to reign in the valley of the Zarafshan.

It may be asked why the Russians acted in this instance so much at variance with the policy they have hitherto pursued, in thus restoring Karshi to the Ameer. This step, however, may reasonably be explained in several ways. In the first place, there are good grounds for believing that most strict injunctions had been sent from St. Petersburg, prohibiting for the present, any further extension of territory; secondly, there are not more than 15,000 or 16,000 troops in Russian Turkestan, and upon this by no means large force devolves the duty of holding the whole province, and of furnishing the garrisons of Tashkend, Khodjend, Samarkand, and other towns of the newly-acquired country. Putting all other considerations aside, General Abramoff might well have hesitated before undertaking to garrison an isolated post, nearly eighty miles beyond the present Russian frontier, and from the immediate occupation of which no great advantages would accrue. But a recent article in the 'Moscow Gazette,' in which the new treaty with Bokhara was discussed, furnished a better explanation of this matter than either of the foregoing ones, for it seemed to indicate that for the present it would be a more advantageous policy for Russia to allow the khanates of Kokand and Bokhara to remain in a state of dependent vassalage, and to permit them to be nominally governed for a time by their own rulers, rather than, by

assuming the government, to burden herself with any fresh accession of territory.

By thus adroitly taking advantage of the dissensions between the Ameer and his son, the Russians have placed the former under a grave obligation to them, and have made him more than ever a vassal of the Czar. Though it is notorious that similar professions of future moderation in Central Asia have been authoritatively announced before, yet it is very possible that the policy sketched out in the following extract of the article to which I have already adverted, may be adhered to by Russia for the present, inasmuch as should it be found expedient hereafter to occupy the whole of the two above khanates, she would have no difficulty in doing so. The extract referred to is as follows :—

'The continued existence of the khanates of Central Asia is not at all opposed to our interests. Until lately all our Turkistan conquests were made from the khanate of Khokand ; yet the Khan of that principality, with a keen perception of his position, is now on pacific, nay, even a friendly, footing with us. In the entire khanate the person most anxious to protect every Russian traveller is the sovereign himself. While thus taking care of our interests, he is of course much more qualified to maintain order and quiet in his dominions than any Russian official who might have been placed in his stead. Moreover, if we had deposed him, we should only have strengthened the neighbouring ruler of Altischar, who, now that an indigenous chief remains at Khokand, may, by the influence of the latter, be neutralised without any sacrifice on our part. All we have said about Khokand is equally true with regard to Bokhara. It is far preferable for us to have a dependent Ameer at Bokhara than to occupy his territory, and ourselves have to deal with the nomadizing Turcomen. Russia has some experience of these wild and erratic tribes. From the Ural she was compelled by them to carry her standard 2,000 versts farther, and seek a *point d'appui* on the river Sir, and amid the ranges of the Celestial hills. Bokhara may be barbarous and Mahomedan, but it is more civilised than her Turcoman neighbours, and may well be accorded the advantage of coercing them instead of ourselves. Bad as the political con-

dition of Bokhara is, the Ameer is fully aware that his existence among sovereigns depends upon our will, and that we shall tolerate him only so long as he proves a good and useful neighbour. His last defeat has completely discouraged him, the loss of Samarcand has enfeebled, and the fact of his having been obliged to accept our help against his son, has further contributed to make him sensible of his position.'

It has been my endeavour in the foregoing pages to give an intelligible *résumé* of the events that have lately occurred in Turkestan, as taken from the somewhat limited sources of information to which I have had access. It is easy, of course, to condemn all Russian official reports, as giving to the world only what is convenient to be known about affairs in Central Asia, and, therefore, as being untrustworthy. It must, however, be borne in mind that these official reports are the only sources from which any accounts, which are at all to be relied on, reach Europe. Making due allowance for all Russian doings being represented in their most favourable and successful light, I see no reason to question the accuracy in the main of the narratives furnished by the official journals.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL SKETCH OF EASTERN TURKESTAN.

NOTHING very accurate is known concerning the early political history of Eastern or Chinese Turkestan. At the beginning of the Christian era the inhabitants are supposed to have been a branch of the Oüigoor tribe of Toorks, and from the above period up to the time of Chenghiz Khan the country appears to have been a dependency of the Chinese Empire. On the death of Chenghiz Khan in 1227, the vast empire that he had acquired was divided, and Eastern Turkestan became incorporated into the Chagatai khanate.* A prince of the Chagatai dynasty continued to rule at Yarkand, the capital of the country, till about the year 1677. In the latter end of the fourteenth century, Tugluk Timour Khan (a descendant of Chenghiz), who then ruled the country, became a convert to Mahomedanism, and during his reign, his subjects, abandoning the Buddhist creed of their forefathers, followed the example of their ruler, and ever since that time the great mass of the inhabitants have been noted for their rigid adherence to the tenets of Islam. Mahomedan priests and saintly teachers who claimed direct descent from Mahomed, and who were known as Kwajas, or

* For a detailed account of Western China, and recent events in Eastern Turkestan, see a brilliant article entitled 'Western China,' in 'Edinburgh Review' for April 1868, from which the materials for this chapter are mainly drawn.

Hojas, became the leaders of the different sects and factions which divided the country. These gradually acquired great influence, and have always played a prominent part in the political fortunes of Alti-shahar. The feuds and hostilities of these rival sects seem, according to Colonel Yule,* to have eventually led to the subjugation of the whole country by a foreign State.

'Late in the seventeenth century, Hojah Appak, the leader of one of those parties called the White Mountain, having been expelled from Kashgar by Ismail Khan, the chief of that State, who was a zealous supporter of the opposite party, or Black Mountain, sought the aid of Galdan Khan, sovereign of the Eleuths or Kalmucks of Zungaria. Taking the occasion offered, that chief, in 1678, invaded the States south of the Thian-Shan, carried off the Khan of Kashgar and his family, and established the Hojas of the White Mountain over the country in authority subordinate to his own. Great discords for many years succeeded, sometimes one faction and sometimes another being uppermost, but some supremacy always continuing to be exercised by the Khans of Zungaria.' This state of affairs lasted till the year 1757, when the Chinese Emperor Kien-Long invaded Zungaria, and conquered it. Then, as a natural consequence, the said emperor claimed dominion over the States of Eastern Turkestan, which had long rendered a sort of feudal homage to the country he had just subdued.† Following up this pretension, he succeeded, in the following year, in bringing them under Chinese rule, and thenceforward, till about three or four years ago, Chinese garrisons held all the principal cities in the land.

Throughout the above period, however, the Imperial

* 'Cathay and the Way Thither,' vol. ii. p. 547, by Colonel Henry Yule, C.B. London, 1866.

† Murray's 'History of China,' vol. i. p. 126.

Manchoo Government had to be constantly on its guard against the intrigues and hostile projects of the descendants of the dispossessed rulers of the country, viz., the Hojas of the White Mountain, who, on their expulsion by the Chinese, had sought refuge in the neighbouring State of Kokand.

The oft-renewed attempts of these exiles (who are said to have been aided and abetted by the Khans of Kokand) to recover their lost patrimony all proved ultimately abortive. Though in some cases they gained a transient success, yet they were always in the end driven out by the Chinese, who maintained their hold upon the country. The last effort made by one of this exiled family, Vali Khan Turra by name, was in 1857. Secretly aided by the Khan of Kokand, he was, like some of his predecessors, successful at first. He gained possession of Kashgar, and signalised his temporary reign in that city by a series of cruelties and atrocities almost without a parallel, even in the annals of Central Asian barbarity. After he had reigned there some months the Chinese drove him out of the township, and regarrisoned the city. The inhabitants of the country, much as they had reason to hate and dread the rule of Vali Khan Turra and his like, held their Manchoo masters in even greater detestation. The former had at least some claim of hereditary right and descent, but as regarded the latter, not only was the galling fact of being subject to a foreign yoke a constant source of irritation to the natives, but they also hated their Chinese masters with all that fierce energy of fanaticism that bigoted Mahomedans are capable of feeling towards those of an alien race and creed. They were ever ready in consequence to embrace any scheme that might present itself to rid themselves of their hated yoke. The chieftain of the exiled family towards whom the hopes and aspirations of what may be termed the legitimist party in the State were most fondly directed was Boozurg Khan, brother of Vali Khan Turra, and son of

Jehangeer Khan, who, in 1825, had succeeded in gaining possession of Kashgar and Yarkand.* He maintained himself as ruler of these two townships for some months, but was eventually overthrown and forced to flee again into exile. In the end he was sold to the Chinese by a Kirghiz tribe with whom he had taken refuge, sent to Pekin, and executed there as a rebel in 1828. His fate is said to have caused a profound sensation throughout Central Asia.

Some six years after the expulsion of Vali Khan Turra in 1858, another opportunity for the inhabitants of Eastern Turkestan to shake off the Manchoo yoke presented itself, which was destined to be more successful than the previous ones had been. In July 1864, there came to Kucha a band of Chinese Mahomedan emissaries named Dūngens, who had been sent from the city of Urumchi (Urumtsi), with the avowed purpose of fomenting an insurrection in Eastern Turkestan against the Manchoo dynasty. It will be necessary to pause here for a moment to explain who these Dūngens, or Tūngens, or Toorgens, or Toonganees (as they are variously called), were:—

These Dungens (as I shall call them) are a martial race of the Soonnee sect of Mahomedans. As regards their origin and antecedents, various traditions are current.† They appear to have been formerly divided into two clans, perfectly distinct from each other, having but little at first sight in common. They may be styled respectively the Western and the Eastern Dungens. The former are supposed to be

* 'The Middle Kingdom,' vol. i. p. 127.

† The account here given of the origin and antecedents of the Dungens is taken from a Russian article on the 'Rising of the Dungens or Mussulman population in Western China,' a manuscript translation of which was most kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Michell, of the Secret Department of the India Office. This article, by Lieut. O. K. Heins, a Russian officer, was originally published in the Russian 'Military Journal' for August 1866.

the descendants of a body of soldiers left by Tamerlane in Zungaria after he returned from his wars with China, and who settled along the banks of the river Ili. They thus came to be known by their countrymen who returned to their homes as the Toorgens (or Dungens), a word signifying 'remnant.' They have retained up to the present day the Mahomedan creed of their forefathers.

The Eastern Dungens, or Chinese Mahomedans, are of a much more ancient origin. They are said to be the descendants of an immense number of Kashgaree Oüigoors, whom, in the beginning of the ninth century, the Chinese Government, in order to weaken their power in the State, deported from their homes around Kashgar, and settled in the Chinese provinces of Shansi and Kansu. These settlers, who at the time of their deportation were ardent Buddhists, were recruited from time to time by emigrants from Eastern Turkestan, and the chief effect of this intercourse was, that after the inhabitants of that country, in the end of the fourteenth century, became (as before related) converts to Islam, and the religion of Mahomed was finally established there, their example was followed by the descendants of the Kashgaree Oüigoors, who had been deported some five centuries before into China. In this manner, though they freely intermarried with the Chinese women, Mahomedanism became gradually the religion of the whole sect. The Eastern Dungens thus in the course of time came to denote a clan, Mahomedan in religion, but Chinese in feature, in language, and in dress. Though subject for centuries to Manchoo rule, they had always (owing principally to the fact of their dissent from the Buddhist creed of the mass of the population amongst whom they dwelt) retained their distinctly marked nationality. Appearing somewhat to resemble the stricter Wahhabees in the rigidity of their asceticism in some points, such as abstinence from opium, wine, and tobacco; in their

strict compliance with the tenets and prescribed formulæ of their faith; and in their devotion to their spiritual leaders, they had long been regarded by their Chinese rulers as an element of political danger in the State. Consequently they were from time to time subject to many severe and oppressive enactments, framed with the view of obliterating their individuality, and merging them in the mass of the population. They rather gained strength, however, from persecution, and these measures seem to have had no other effect than to defeat their own object, inasmuch as they tended to bind the different branches of the sect into closer union among themselves. Thus there became diffused through China Proper, more especially in the western provinces, a powerful faction, bitterly disaffected to the Manchoo dynasty.

It was in the year 1862, at Singan-fu, the capital of the province of Shensi, that the Dungens first broke out in open rebellion against the Chinese Government. Their first efforts were crowned with success, and the insurrection spread rapidly in a north-westerly direction across the desert of Gobi.

City after city fell into the hands of the insurgents, who were joined, in many cases, by the Mussulman population, and the feeble efforts of the Chinese Government to stem the tide of revolt were utterly inadequate to the crisis. A holy war was proclaimed by the Dungens against the Manchoo dynasty, the time for whose destruction had, it was declared, at length arrived, and they invoked the help of all their orthodox brethren to aid them in the overthrow of the infidels. Emissaries were sent into every province and city where their co-religionists were known to exist, and everywhere their arrival was signalised by the instant revolt of all the members of their sect. The Dungens had no difficulty in most cases in heading these insurrections, as their martial and soldierlike qualities had caused them to be largely employed, despite their creed, in the ranks of the Imperial army.

Thus they were to be found in large numbers in all the garrisons of Western China and Eastern Turkestan.

Crossing the desert of Gobi, the revolutionists reached Khamil and passed on to Urumchi, in both of which large cities their cause was completely triumphant. At Urumchi they divided themselves into two bands, one of which took a westerly route along the great caravan road into Zungaria, while the other, crossing the Thian-Shan, proceeded in a south-westerly direction towards Kucha, one of the most easterly towns of Eastern Turkestan. It is to the doings of this party that attention must now be confined.

From this point the thread of the narrative may be taken up from where it was interrupted, in order to give a sketch of the Dungens. In continuing the relation of events, I cannot do better here than quote *in extenso* the graphic narrative given in the article on Western China,* upon which I have already drawn to a great extent for the materials of this chapter.

When the wave of Dungen insurrection swept into Eastern Turkestan from across the desert of Gobi, in the middle of 1864, the following was the relative position of parties in the province. 'There were the Chinese in military possession, with a force of about 14,000 men; there were the Toonganees (Dungens), forming a large and hitherto staunch portion of the Chinese garrison; and there were the native non-Toonganee Mahomedans (Oosbegs, Sarts, Kirghizes, and others), who in the eastern districts identified their interests with the Toonganees, but who in Alti-shahar held Chinese and Toonganees in equal abomination, and sighed for a return of the Khojas from their exile in Kokand.

* See 'Edinburgh Review' for April 1868, art. 'Western China.' The author of this very interesting article is, I believe, Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie, late of the Indian Civil Service, who is a well-known authority on all questions of Central Asian politics.

'On the arrival at Kucha of the Tooganees, who had been despatched from Urumchi to raise Eastern Toorkistan, their clansmen of the Chinese garrison at once fraternised with them and mutinied. The other Mahomedan residents joined the Tooganees; and the Chinese, powerless to resist the combination, all had their throats cut. The triumphant Moslems then elected a Khoja, named Rashud-ood-deen, of great local sanctity, to be their ruler; and under his direction they rapidly obtained possession of Aksu, Oosh-turfan, and Lai Musjid. Rashud-ood-deen's next blow was to have fallen on Yarkand, the seat of the local government of the southern circuit of Ili. The Manchoo governor, however, precipitated events at that place by the very measures he took to counteract the move. By largesses and yet more liberal promises, he induced his Toonganee soldiers, through their priests, the Imaums, to swear solemnly on the Koran that they would stand by their colours to the death. They observed the oath for three whole days; but on July 24, 1864, they mutinied, broke open the jail, released the prisoners, and plundered all the dwellings of the Chinese civil population. Next day they proclaimed a holy war against the infidel—a device which secured them the co-operation of every Moslem in Yarkand. The Chinese troops had now to retire within their fortifications and submit to a siege. Scarcely had this result been attained at Yarkand, before the same antagonistic elements came into collision at Kashgar. Here too the Chinese took the initiative, though by a sterner process than that which had failed so signally at the capital. The Manchoo commandant of Kashgar invited the Toonganees to a feast in his fort; they came, and as they unsuspectingly sat at meat, a volley of musketry was poured into them from all sides: of the seven hundred men who were in this doomed assembly, fifty only are said to have made good their escape. Instantly the Mussulmans

of the city flew to arms, with a cry for vengeance; and the Chinese, like their compatriots at Yarkand, found themselves beleaguered within their own citadel. Almost at the same time a similar tragedy was enacted at Khoten; the Chinese began by massacring a number of Toonganees, and the Mahomedan citizens retaliated with vigour. But in this instance no fortifications availed to save the Chinese from immediate ruin; they were blotted out of Khoten, and a native priest, named Hajee Hubeeboolla, was elected to rule in their stead. Soon afterwards Rashud-ood-deen's preparations at Kucha for an advance on Yarkand were complete; and on September 30 he despatched a force of 7,000 horse and foot and 250 camel-guns to aid the revolted Yarkandees in pressing the siege of the fort. The Chinese defended themselves with the courage of despair, but famine and undermined ramparts soon rendered further resistance hopeless; then they fired their magazine, and anticipated in flames of their own creation the certain death which awaited them from their relentless foe.

'The fort of Kashgar was now the last place in which a vestige of the Chinese power remained. While its fate still hung in the balance, Boozurg Khan Khoja from Kokand rode into the streets of the city with a following of 500 men, chiefly Kirghizes and Kipchaks. At last the Toorks had got their long-looked-for deliverer among them, and they hailed him as their rightful prince with acclamations. But, alas for the misdirection of popular regard! not Charles Stuart nor Louis *le désiré* ever so disappointed the hopes of their enthusiastic partisans. Boozurg Khan proved a worthless debauchee, who, before many weeks were over, was content that the burden of princely duties should be transferred to an officer of his own staff, Yakoob Beg. Of a very different stamp was this new ruler of Kashgar. By birth a Tajik, and a subject of Kokand, he had for many years

played a conspicuous part in the stormy politics of his native khanate. The deed for which he hitherto had been best known would in Europe have covered his name with hopeless dishonour, but the moral sense of Central Asia is less nice, and he who in 1847, as commandant of Ak Musjid, had accepted Russian gold in exchange for a portion of the territory committed to his charge, still retained among his countrymen a reputation for exceptionally fair dealing. Brave, energetic, and open-handed, he was popular with his brother-chieftains, and beloved by his own retainers. At the time to which our story relates he held the rank of Kooshbegee, or commander-in-chief of the Kokand forces; but, as Kokand existed only on the sufferance of Russian generals, his instincts had rightly taught him that even a subordinate share in Boozurg Khan's venture across the Bolor offered a finer field for his ability and ambition than any that was open to him at home.

'Meanwhile famine was effectually doing its work within the fort of Kashgar. By March 1865, two thousand Chinese had died of starvation. The remainder of the garrison then for the most part committed suicide, and Yakoob Kooshbegee became master of the fort with little difficulty. So fell, after a whole century of continuous dominion, the Chinese power in Eastern Toorkistan.'

No sooner had the Mahomedans thus asserted their sway over Eastern Turkestan, than the truth of the Persian proverb, 'Ten dervishes can sleep under one blanket, but a whole kingdom is not wide enough for two kings,' began to be exemplified. There were three rival factions in the field, two of whom it was evident would probably have to succumb to the third who should prove the strongest.

At Kucha, Aksu, and Yarkand, the Dungen party was in power. At Khoten, Habeeb-oollah ruled with the title of 'Khan badshah,' while at Kashgar that able and ambitious

soldier of fortune, Yakoob Beg, who aimed at the sovereignty of the whole of Alti-shahar, had as yet succeeded in getting possession only of the township of Kashgar. Of these three rival rulers Habeeb-oollah was decidedly the weakest, and it was evident that the contest for mastery would have to be fought out between the Dungens under Rashud-ood-deen and the adherents of Yakoob Beg. A minute recital of the various details of the struggle for supremacy that ensued would probably be tedious. Suffice it to say, that Yakoob Beg first turned his arms against the Dungens, and in April 1866 captured from them Yarkand. Following up this success, he gained possession of city after city, till, at the close of 1867, he had completely subdued the country. From that time up to the present, Yakoob Beg has remained undisputed master of Alti-shahar. Habeeb-oollah, the ruler of Khoten, perished in the struggle, having been taken prisoner by Yakoob Beg, by whose orders he was shortly afterwards barbarously murdered.

The foregoing narrative is a sketch, though an imperfect one, of the political history of Eastern Turkestan down to the latest accounts. Whether Yakoob Beg will be able to retain his newly acquired kingdom depends mainly on his own prudence and on the forbearance of the Russians. The latter have, as is well known, long fixed a covetous eye upon the country, as its geographical position makes it, in a commercial point of view, a most desirable and important acquisition for them. If Yakoob Beg is wise enough to re-open the old channels of commerce (which are said to have been blocked up to a great extent during the late disturbances in the country), and to give a passage, fettered with no arbitrary or vexatious restrictions, to Russian trade between China and Western Asia through his territory, he may yet remain unmolested for a long time to come. It might have been thought that so able and shrewd a ruler

would inevitably have recognised the necessity of keeping on good terms with his powerful neighbours. There have, however, been rumours that he is otherwise disposed. An article in the 'Invalide Russe,'* published in the beginning of June 1868, in describing the state of affairs on the Russian frontier in the beginning of the above year, stated: 'Another cause of disturbance is Yakoob Beg, the ruler of Alti-shahar, who having been long inimical to the Khan of Kokand, his ancient suzerain, not only refuses to pay the tribute the Chinese formerly accorded to Kokand for Alti-shahar,† but even threatens to occupy Kokand, and depose its prince. Nor is he on better terms with ourselves. As we learn from our spies, Yakoob Beg, notwithstanding his hostile relations to Kokand, has called upon her Khan, leaving him the alternative of a common campaign against the Russians, or

* Letter of Berlin correspondent of the 'Times,' June 17, 1868.

† The history of the tribute here referred to in the 'Invalide Russe' I conceive to be as follows:—

M. Heins, in his article already referred to in this chapter, states that the court of Pekin paid 200 yambas annually to the Khans of Kokand to prevent the entry of the Hojas into Eastern Turkestan, especially those of the White Mountaineer party; and that, consequently, the Khans kept a vigilant watch over the movements of these descendants of the exiled family, who had once ruled in Eastern Turkestan, and who, since their expulsion, had resided in the khanate of Kokand. However this may be, the Hojas seem to have had no difficulty in evading this surveillance, as on several occasions during the present century they made incursions into Eastern Turkestan with a view of regaining their lost patrimony, and the rulers of Kokand are even said secretly to have aided and abetted their efforts.

It is not surprising that Yakoob Beg, who had been himself a retainer of Boozurg Khan (one of the chiefs of the exiled family), and who had raised himself to power on the ruins of the Manchoo dynasty, should have refused to continue to the Khans of Kokand the payment of the tribute which had formerly been accorded to them by the court of Pekin, on the distinct condition that they should do their utmost to keep adventurers like himself out of Eastern Turkestan.

war with himself.' It is evident, moreover, from a paper published last year by Mr. Forsyth, C.B., of the Indian Civil Service, on the trade of Central Asia, that Yakoob Beg is apprehensive of Russian designs on his territory.* Though the conversion of Eastern Turkestan into a Russian province would not very much further the assumption by Russia of a threatening attitude towards India (always supposing that she has any hostile projects in that quarter), yet the moral effect produced by the occupation of the country, and the presence of a Russian garrison at Yarkand, which is within so short a distance of our political boundary, would be sensibly felt in India, and would be a potent element of possible disturbance on our northern frontier. What will be the result of this juxtaposition of the frontier-lines of the two empires, which, sooner or later, seems inevitable, time alone will show.

* It is not known how far to the eastward the dominion of Yakoob Beg extends. There is no doubt that the Chinese have been driven back as far as the little-explored desert of Gobi. There is not much prospect that the court of Pekin will make any attempt to re-establish its sway in Eastern Turkestan, as at present it has quite enough to do in maintaining its tottering power in some of the more central provinces of the empire.

CHAPTER VI.

AFFGHANISTAN, AND RECENT EVENTS IN THAT COUNTRY.

AFFGHANISTAN (literally the country of the Affghans) is generally understood in the present day as a geographical term; that is to say, it denotes in common acceptation a country with distinctly defined boundaries. In reality, however, the term, like those of a similar Persian termination, derives its origin from the name of a race, and applied originally to the soil and region occupied by it. Similarly, in the common parlance of Asiatics, Farangistan, or Frangistan, i.e. the country of the Franks, applies to the regions inhabited by all European races alike, and denotes the whole of Europe. Affghanistan is thus in reality an ethnological, and not a geographical term, as it originally could not be held to apply to any one constituted authority, but was capable of comprising any number of governments and tribes. There have been periods in the present century when Affghanistan has been broken up into four principalities, ruled by different chiefs, perfectly distinct in a diplomatic point of view, and having but little community of internal and external interest. Without going too minutely into the past history of the Affghans, it may be remarked that this people, up to the time of the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849, always exercised an enormous influence over the fortunes of India, and to secure their goodwill and alliance has for many years past been held to be one of the cardinal points in the political creed of all Anglo-Indian Governments.

In 1747, after the death of Nadir Shah, the Affghan kingdom, which had fallen under the dominion of Persia, was reconstructed by Ahmed Shah, a prince of the great family of the Suddozyes. He died in 1773, after a reign of twenty-six years, and his son Timour Shah reigned in his stead. By a course of unbridled cruelty, debauchery, and extravagance, he brought the kingdom to the verge of ruin, and at his death, in 1793, left it in a most disorganised and impoverished state. Soon after his death, the Nemesis of Mahomedan polygamy spread its curse over the land, and then, as in more recent times, was beheld the spectacle of the sons, by different mothers, all conspiring to gain sole possession of the inheritance of the father. At that time the Affghan kingdom comprised the provinces of Cabul, Candahar, Herat, and Peshawur, and extended from Herat in the west to Cashmere in the east. Zemaun Shah, who had been nominated as successor to the throne by Timour Shah, succeeded his father without encountering at first much opposition. After a reign of some four or five years, he was deposed by his half-brother, Shah Mahmood, who put out his eyes, in order to incapacitate him from all further power in the State. Shah Soojah-ūl-mūlk, the full brother of Zemaun Shah, succeeded in overthrowing Shah Mahmood, and cast him into prison. Shah Soojah in his turn, after a short reign, was in 1809 forced to flee from his throne, and seek refuge in exile, owing to the hostility of the powerful rival family of the Barukzyes, whose enmity he had provoked. Futteh Khan, the chief of the Barukzyes, after the flight of Shah Soojah, liberated Shah Mahmood from captivity, and set him on the throne, appointing himself as prime minister. He soon held all the real power in the State, and made use of his influence to strengthen his own family and connections by appointing his own brothers as the governors of the different provinces of the kingdom. In 1818, Shah Mahmood, instigated by

his son Kamran, ordered the murder of Futteh Khan, to whom he owed his throne. This tragedy was the signal for the instant revolt of the Barukzye chiefs, who swore to avenge the murder of their elder brother and chief of their family. After a brief struggle they drove Shah Mahmood from his throne, and the Barukzyes became dominant throughout Affghanistan. They at first divided among themselves the sovereignty of the provinces of the kingdom. It was not, however, in the nature of Affghan politics that this state of things should last long. The Barukzye brothers soon began to fight among themselves for the largest share of sovereignty, and during the struggle that ensued the affairs of the country were thrown into a state of the most terrible confusion. At last, in the year 1826, Dost Mahomed Khan, the youngest of the Barukzye brothers, succeeded in asserting his superiority over his rivals, and from that year till the capture of Ghuznee by British troops, Dost Mahomed Khan was supreme at Cabul. A man of rare strength of character, and singular ability and shrewdness, he thoroughly understood the people over whom he ruled, and he has been as yet the only ruler during the present century who has been able to hold together the different provinces of his kingdom under his own undivided sway.

When the English army finally quitted Affghanistan, and we renounced all further interference with the internal concerns of the country, Dost Mahomed hastened back to his old kingdom, secured the reins of government, and reassumed the title of Ameer. For the next thirteen years, i.e. from 1842–55, all diplomatic intercourse between the Affghan and Indian Governments appears to have ceased. In the latter year negotiations for the ratification of a treaty of friendship were entered into, and the then heir apparent of Affghanistan, Gholam Haidar Khan, who subsequently died, came to Peshawur to ratify it. Two years later a friendly

mission of British officers visited Candahar during the Persian war, in the beginning of 1857. The Indian Government then endeavoured, among other objects, to arrange for the establishment of a permanent British embassy at the court of Cabul. The mission utterly failed to effect this object, as the permanent residence of British officers at his capital did not at all suit the views or wishes of the Affghan monarch. In modification of this demand, it was agreed in Article VII. of the treaty then concluded, that 'at the pleasure of the Indian Government, a vakeel, not a European officer, should remain at Cabul on the part of the British Government.'

The mission, however, 'succeeded in purchasing the Ameer's goodwill at a lakh of rupees (10,000*l.*) per mensem for so long as his services might be of use to us.'* This timely piece of diplomacy, coupled with the influence of Mahomed Azim Khan, over the Affghan people, probably saved the Punjab from an Affghan invasion during the Indian mutiny. The Indian Government had good reasons for not wishing to enter into any very close or permanent engagements with the ruler of Affghanistan, as the integrity of the kingdom was not likely to be preserved for any length of time. Dost Mahomed was an old man, and his death was looked forward to, by all those who were acquainted with Affghan politics, with the gloomiest forebodings, as it was known that many of his sons would certainly dispute the succession with his favourite son Shere Ali, who, after the death of Gholam Haidar, in 1858, had been nominated by his father as heir apparent to the throne. In 1862, Dost Mahomed came into open collision with his nephew, Sultan Ahmed, the governor of Herat. The ostensible cause of dispute was the district of Furrah, which both uncle and nephew claimed as a part of their dominions. In reality,

* 'Quarterly Review,' October 1865, art. 'The Russians in Central Asia,' p. 566.

Dost Mahomed had long been intensely jealous of his nephew, whom he hated for his Persian predilections, and probably he desired nothing better than a plausible excuse for beginning hostilities against him. He accordingly advanced against and laid siege to Herat. This act of Dost Mahomed rendered the position of England as regards Herat, and her relations with Persia and Affghanistan, a somewhat embarrassing and complicated one. Briefly expressed, the state of affairs was this. The treaty of Paris, concluded between England and Persia in 1857, was in force, and by this treaty the latter Power was bound over never to attack Herat, and always to recognise its entire freedom from all Persian vassalage and control. England had no corresponding treaty with Affghanistan which could enable her to control or coerce the policy of that country with regard to the said city, because, relying upon the jealousy between Persia and Affghanistan, it had been thought that Herat, so long as it was governed by an Affghan prince of the reigning royal house, would be in no danger of falling under Persian influence. No provision had been made in the above-named treaty for the utterly unlooked-for contingency of the voluntary dependence of a Barukzye governor of Herat upon Persia, nor for his being at feud with the reigning prince of Affghanistan, to whom it was contemplated he should render a sort of independent homage.* Persia, of course, was well aware that if

* As already explained in a former chapter, it had long been the interest and policy of England to keep Herat from being nominally or virtually dependent upon Persia, as that Power was, for many reasons, supposed to be too susceptible to Russian influence. With this view, in the treaty of Paris (1857) it had been stipulated that the province and city of Herat should be ruled over by an Affghan prince. By this arrangement it was thought that Herat and its destinies would be directed by the ruler of Affghanistan, whom the English Government would be able to influence or coerce, rather than by Persia, who, from

once Dost Mahomed wrested Herat from Sultan Ahmed, that city would no longer continue to be, as it had virtually been for the five preceding years, a mere appanage of the Persian crown, but would become in reality, as contemplated by the treaty of Paris, entirely independent of her. She was therefore highly indignant at this proceeding of the Ameer of Affghanistan, which, she maintained, threatened to disturb the tranquillity of her frontier. She complained that England had instigated him to advance upon Herat, and thought that her object in doing so was in order that she might thereby free herself from the undignified position in which she was placed by that city still continuing to be dependent upon Persia, in spite of all the endeavours of the British Government to the contrary.

Persia alleged, moreover, that such conduct was contrary to the spirit of the treaty of Paris, inasmuch as the British Government had therein engaged to use its influence with the States of Affghanistan to prevent any cause of umbrage being given by them to Persia. When she uttered these remonstrances, Persia seemed to forget entirely that she had from the first violated the spirit of the treaty in the most flagrant way by the appointment of Sultan Ahmed to its governorship, and therefore she would scarcely have been entitled to complain, if England had repaid her in her own coin. There was, however, no ground for her accusations, as although the English Government had ample reason to be dissatisfied with the state of affairs at Herat, it had done everything in its power to dissuade Dost Mahomed from attacking that city.

This unsatisfactory state of things was brought to a close by three events which occurred almost simultaneously, viz.

the necessities of her position, would always, willingly or unwillingly, be too subservient to Russia. How Persia managed to evade this precaution of the English Government has already been told in Chapter I.

the capture of Herat, which was taken by storm by the Cabul army on May 28, 1863, the death of Sultan Ahmed from apoplexy, and lastly, the crowning misfortune of the death of Dost Mahomed himself, which took place on June 9, twelve days after the capture of Herat.

'The old Ameer left sixteen sons. Four of these were too young at the time of his death to have acquired any personal influence, but of the elder twelve every single man aspired, if not to sole supremacy as his father's successor, at any rate to a separate principality, independent of any brother's control. Those whose ambition aimed at the entire kingdom were five in number, namely, Afzul and Azim Khan, sons of one mother, and Shere Ali, Ameen Khan, and Shureef Khan, sons of another and more highly born lady.'* All these sons, with the exception of Shere Ali, who had long borne the designation of heir apparent to the throne, held the governorships of different provinces of their father's kingdom. Of these five competitors for the throne, Shere Ali and Azim Khan were unquestionably the most able and best fitted to govern the kingdom. In the confusion that followed on the death of Dost Mahomed, Shere Ali succeeded his father without opposition, and all his brothers joined in rendering him homage as the rightful Ameer of Affghanistan. Before the end of the year he was formally recognised by the British Government as heir to the vacant throne.

This peaceful state of things was not destined to be of long duration. Azim Khan, governor of the eastern districts

* 'Edinburgh Review,' January 1868, art. 'Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence.' The account given in this chapter of events in Affghanistan from Dost Mahomed's death down to the autumn of 1866, is taken wholly from the article just named. As it was compiled from official and authentic sources by Mr. J. W .S. Wyllie, no better authority could be quoted.

of Khoorm and Khost, was the first to raise the standard of revolt; but the Ameer, gathering his available forces together, marched against him with such promptitude, that he was forced to submit, and again to swear fealty to Shere Ali as his sovereign. No event of any importance took place till the spring of 1864, when Afzul Khan, following suit to Azim Khan, proclaimed himself throughout his province of Balkh (by virtue of being his father's eldest son) as Ameer of Affghanistan. Almost at the same time, Azim Khan, seizing a pretext for revolt, again arrayed himself in arms against his sovereign. Shere Ali lost no time in confronting his rivals. Despatching his most able general, Mahomed Rafeek, to deal with Azim Khan, he himself marched northwards to meet the advancing forces of Afzul Khan. Mahomed Rafeek, as soon as he entered Khoorm, utterly crushed Azim Khan, who, abandoned by his troops, was forced to become a refugee in British territory. The said general then made haste to reinforce the Ameer, who had already, on June 3, fought an obstinate but indecisive battle with the insurgent forces under Afzul Khan near Bameean. The contest, however, was not continued, for a reconciliation was patched up between the two brothers, who embraced, and swore eternal friendship. Afzul Khan was then confirmed in his old governorship. A few days afterwards, the Ameer having occasion to suspect the conduct of Abdul Rahman, the son of Afzul Khan, at Takhtapūl, summoned him to his presence. That young chief, instead of obeying the summons, fled across the Oxus to Bokhara. Rendered ungovernable by passion, Shere Ali visited the sins of the son upon the father. Afzul Khan was seized and thrown into prison, and his property was confiscated. Such treachery as this destroyed all confidence in the Ameer, and estranged many of his most zealous supporters from his cause. After visiting Takhtapūl, where he confiscated Afzul Khan's

property, he returned to Cabul, which city he entered in triumph on November 14, 1864.

Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman had on his arrival at Bokhara, by a recital of his own and his father's wrongs, succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of his father-in-law, the Ameer of Bokhara, in his behalf, and under the auspices of the latter he busied himself in equipping a force, with which he contemplated making a descent upon Cabul in the following year. In the south, affairs were not more promising. At Candahar, Ameen Khan, Shureef Khan, and their nephew, Jallal-ood-deen, had entered into a confederacy against the Ameer, with a view to depose him from the throne. The severity of the winter prevented any active measures of hostility till the spring of 1865, when Jallal-ood-deen opened the campaign by an ineffectual attempt to gain possession of the fortress of Kelat-i-Ghilzie. This served as a signal for the malcontents to begin. Azim Khan suddenly left Rawul Pindee, recrossed the border, and raised the standard of revolt in his old province of Khoorm, while the confederate chiefs openly defied their sovereign at Candahar. Thus threatened by Abdul Rahman in the north, his sovereignty openly challenged in the south, and with Azim Khan raising the country in rebellion in the east, the position in which Shere Ali found himself was one well calculated to try sorely the metal of which he was made. He met his foes with an undaunted front. Mahomed Rafeek was sent against Azim Khan, with instructions to settle with him as he had done before, and then join the main army, with which Shere Ali intended to march against Candahar. Mahomed Rafeek, having put to flight Azim Khan and his adherents, joined the Ameer, whose united forces advanced to Kelat-i-Ghilzie, to attack the Candaharee insurgents. On June 6, a great battle was fought at Kujhbaz, within two miles of the above fortress, between the opposing armies, in

which the Ameer, after an obstinate fight, utterly defeated the rebel chiefs. His signal victory was, however, marred by the death of his eldest son, who was killed by his uncle, Ameen Khan, in single combat during the engagement. Ameen Khan was also himself slain immediately afterwards. Excessive grief for his bereavement seems to have paralysed for a time the energies of the Ameer, for he permitted the shattered forces of the rebels to retreat unmolested to Candahar. The effect of his victory was, however, decisive, for when he advanced upon that city a few days subsequently, the rebel chiefs surrendered it, and sued for pardon.

The arms of the Ameer thus far had been crowned with success. But there were darker times in store for him in the future. Abdul Rahman, with an invading force from Bokhara, reached the banks of the Oxus in July. As soon as he crossed into his old province of Balkh, the troops which the governor of the province, Futteh Mahomed, led against him mutinied, and joined the ranks of the invader. Abdul Rahman, finding himself thus master of the whole province, advanced upon Cabul. Shere Ali, as soon as he heard of the danger which threatened his capital, instead of hastening there in person with all his available troops, deputed to one of his sons, Ibrahim Khan, and to Mahomed Rafeek, the care of its defence. Ibrahim Khan was, however, not the man for such an emergency. Essentially dull and irresolute, he not only took no adequate measures to stop the advance of Abdul Rahman, but he managed to give such mortal offence to his colleague, Mahomed Rafeek, that that hitherto faithful adherent, taking with him a large body of retainers, transferred his allegiance to the invader. Shere Ali, roused momentarily from the lethargy of grief in which he was plunged by the news of this dangerous defection, sent reinforcements to his son's aid, under Shureef Khan; but he in his turn, as might have been expected from his

antecedents, went over to the side of Abdul Rahman as soon as he reached Cabul. Ibrahim Khan, thus left single-handed to deal with his opponents, had no choice open but to have recourse to negotiation, and by that means stave off, if possible, the fall of the capital. In this he was successful for a time, for though the Balkh army was close to Cabul, the strength of the troops was so paralysed by the severity of the cold, and by the hardships which they had endured during their march from the Bokhara territory, that Abdul Rahman was glad to agree to an armistice till February 19, in the following year, during which time his troops were to be stationed in comfortable winter quarters in the neighbourhood of the capital. Owing, however, to the passive inertness of the Ameer at Candahar, who would do nothing to retrieve his fortunes, all further negotiation failed, and at the termination of the armistice on February 19, 1866, Azim Khan, who had meantime joined his nephew Abdul Rahman, advanced upon Cabul, which was treacherously surrendered to him by the garrison, and on March 2, 1866, he was publicly installed as Ameer of Affghanistan.

The fall of his capital seems to have roused Shere Ali at length from the disastrous stupor in which he had so long been plunged. Rallying his energies at length into action, he advanced to Kelat-i-Ghilzie, with a force of about 9,000 men, in order to retrieve, if possible, his fallen fortunes. On the other hand, though dissension was already rife between Azim Khan and Abdul Rahman, they lost no time in preparing for the encounter. Starting from Kelat-i-Ghilzie on May 5, Shere Ali came up with his enemies late on the evening of the 9th, at Shekhabad, when an indecisive action took place. Early the next morning an obstinate battle was fought, and it is probable that the bravery and impetuosity of the Ameer, who gallantly led his troops to the attack, would have overborne all opposition. Treachery,

however, as is ever the case with the time-serving Affghans, was again at work, and at the critical turning-point of the engagement, the whole of his Candaharee troops deserted his cause, and went over to the enemy. The Ameer, seeing that all chance of success for that day was gone, fled, accompanied by a small band of faithful adherents, towards Ghuznee, where the false-hearted garrison shut the gates in his face. The fallen Ameer was forced to pass on, and continued his flight towards Kelat-i-Ghilzie and Candahar, which latter place he succeeded in reaching in safety. Immediately after the battle, Abdul Rahman hurried forward to release his father, Afzul Khan, who was in confinement at Ghuznee, and conducted him in triumph to his camp. As soon as Afzul Khan was released from captivity, Azim Khan and Abdul Rahman, waiving their common jealousies, consented to recognise him (by virtue of his being their father's eldest son) as a common superior, and he in his turn accordingly, on May 21, 1866, was installed with much pomp and ceremony as Ameer of Affghanistan. Yielding, however, to sensual enjoyments, he soon became a mere puppet in the hands of Azim Khan, in whom all real power in the State became centred. Shere Ali meanwhile, nothing daunted by his reverses, was by no means disposed to give up the contest. He still retained possession of a considerable portion of his kingdom, and many of the chiefs of the country still adhered to his cause. The prestige, moreover, that even in his failing fortunes still clung to him as the recognised ally of the British Government, was a tower of strength in his support. In the end of May 1866, the position of affairs was as follows. Afzul Khan was in possession of the Cabul and Ghuznee valleys northwards as far as Mookhur, a place half-way between Cabul and Ghuznee, and also of the Jellalabad district. He was supported by Azim Khan, who was in fact the real ruler. Fyz Mahomed,

one of Shere Ali's half-brothers, reigned, as it were, independently in Balkh. Shere Ali still ruled in the south and west of the kingdom, retaining the districts of Candahar, Kelat-i-Ghilzie, Girishk, Furrah, and Herat. He was ably supported by his son Yakoob Khan, the governor of the latter city, and also by Shureef Khan, who provided money liberally for his necessities.

Soon after his defeat at Shekhabad the prospects of Shere Ali began to brighten.* Wullee Mahomed (one of his half-brothers) went over to his side together with many of the nominal adherents of Azim Khan. This example was soon followed by Fyz Mahomed, the governor of the northern provinces of Balkh. The Ameer managed to raise sufficient funds for the purposes of his government from the district of Candahar, and he laboured day and night at the equipment of his army. By the middle of August he had collected 1,200 regular infantry and 600 cavalry; to the command of the former he appointed his incompetent son, Ibrahim Khan, while that 'shameless weathercock' Shureef Khan was entrusted with the leadership of the latter. In spite of his time-serving antecedents, he was subsequently appointed Governor of Candahar, and from that post raised to commander-in-chief. He did not, however, retain his high position long, for he was soon discovered intriguing, as of old, with the opposite faction, and disgraced. Shortly after this he finally abandoned Shere Ali's cause.

Early in October, Shere Ali felt himself strong enough to make an advance from Candahar. He only got, however, as far as Deh Khoja, a short distance from the city, where he seems to have remained for the next two months.

* From this point down to the spring of 1868 the narrative is taken from a précis of 'recent events in Affghanistan,' drawn up by Mr. H. Le Poer Wynne, under-secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, who kindly placed his compilation at my disposal.

Meanwhile at Cabul the aspect of affairs seems to have been gloomy enough. The accounts that reached India were nothing but a monotonous record of the intrigues of the different chieftains and rival aspirants for the chief offices of the State. Letters told of a reign of terror as maintained by the *de facto* rulers, whose principal acts seem to have been a series of confiscations, of arbitrary loans ruthlessly exacted in order to replenish a failing treasury, of constant imprisonments, and of savage executions. As a necessary consequence of such a system of government, there was a general feeling of fear, distrust, and despondency among all classes of the people. Meanwhile rebellion was rife in the provinces, and no troops could be spared for its suppression. All this time Fyz Mahomed continually threatened the capital from the north, while Shere Ali, who may now be styled the ex-Ameer, was preparing to advance from Candahar in the south. These facts, coupled with the universal disaffection of their subjects, and the impossibility of collecting the revenue of the country, rendered the position of the confederate brothers so critical that they tried in November 1866 to make terms with Shere Ali, and proposed to him that each should retain the territory that they were then in possession of. This attempt to negotiate, however, came to nothing, and the contest was accordingly renewed. With the exception of a slight skirmish at Bolan Robat, on December 30, nothing worthy of note occurred till January 16 of the following year (1867), when a battle was fought at Kelat-i-Ghilzie, which was for the time decisive. Shere Ali was again defeated, and fled with the wreck of his shattered forces to Candahar. On his arrival there, the time-serving garrison he had left there for its defence refused to let him enter the city, and he was, therefore, fain to continue his flight to Herat, which place he reached on February 15.

It would be wearisome to follow too closely the varying phases of the struggle which was continued for the next two years, i.e. during 1867 and 1868. The following brief outline of the doings of the more prominent actors on the scene will suffice to show the general course of events.

Some three months after Shere Ali's defeat at Kelat-i-Ghilzie, Fyz Mahomed gained a victory on April 23 over a force sent against him by Azim Khan. Sarwar Khan, who was in command, was completely defeated, and obliged to make a retreat upon Cabul. Shere Ali now betook himself to the north, and joined Fyz Mahomed. For the next four or five months there was a period of inaction on both sides. In the autumn, however, Shere Ali and Fyz Mahomed advanced by two routes from Balkh upon Cabul. On September 17, Abdul Rahman, who had marched from the capital to oppose them, attacked and defeated the latter at Killa Alladad, on the southern slopes of the Hindoo Koosh, and Fyz Mahomed himself was killed by a cannon-shot during the battle. The ex-Ameer, Shere Ali, after maintaining his position for some little time in Balkh, fell back upon Herat, where he arrived about January 18, 1868. As soon as he reached the said city he immediately prepared for a fresh advance on Candahar, and by the end of January 1868 his forces seem to have been concentrated at Furrah, at which point he was, from various causes, unable to advance for the next two months.

Meanwhile the *de facto* Ameer of Affghanistan, Afzul Khan, had died at Cabul on October 7, 1867, and Azim Khan succeeded to the title of Ameer. Afzul Khan's son, Abdul Rahman, was at first disposed to assert his claims, but consented to waive them in favour of his uncle, principally, it would appear, from a consciousness of inability, from want of a personal following, to maintain his pretensions. When the days of mourning for his father were over,

Abdul Rahman marched at the head of a force into the rebellious province of Balkh, in order to bring it again under subjection.

It is time, however, to turn to the south, where fortune was once more beginning to smile upon the ex-Ameer, Shere Ali. On April 1 (1868) his forces came into collision with those of Azim Khan, near Girishk, on the northern banks of the Helmund, and in the conflict that ensued the ex-Ameer was completely victorious, and, as the fruit of his success, regained possession of Candahar and Kelat. He entered the former city in triumph on May 10, 1868.

During the year 1868 the contest for supremacy was carried on with varying success, but from the date of the battle on the banks of the Helmund, the tide of fortune seems to have turned once more in favour of Shere Ali. In the end of May his troops defeated those of Azim Khan, the *de facto* Ameer, near Maimanah. A short time after this, Yakoob Khan captured Ghuznee. Promptly following up this success, Shere Ali advanced with all his available forces upon Cabul, which city had meanwhile been captured for him by his partisans from the north. He accordingly entered the capital without opposition about the end of August, and was again, after so many vicissitudes of fortune, proclaimed as Ameer of Affghanistan. Azim Khan, who was, of course, *more Affghano*, deserted by all his adherents from the first hour of his defeat, fled to the north to escape being betrayed and made prisoner.

As soon as Shere Ali found himself firmly re-established at Cabul, he renewed his earnest applications to the Indian Government for assistance, as, though he was able to maintain his position against his enemies, he was not strong enough to crush them entirely and to restore order to the country. An account of the course of action taken by the Indian Government on the receipt of this last application

belongs more appropriately to a subsequent chapter, and will be more fully dwelt upon therein. It will be sufficient here to state that a change had for some time past been taking place in the views of the Indian Government, and, consequently, that the policy of non-intervention and neutrality, and of the recognition of the *de facto* rulers of Affghanistan, whoever they might happen to be, was about to be reversed. Shere Ali's last application, therefore, met with a very different response to that which had hitherto been accorded to the previous requests of both factions in Affghanistan. Money to the amount of some 60,000*l.* was sent to him, and, in the beginning of the present year, news reached England that by means of this timely assistance Shere Ali had reduced his opponents, Azim Khan and Abdul Rahman, to such straits that they wished to seek an asylum in British territory. Though they seem to have endeavoured even once more during the present year to resume the contest, the visit of Shere Ali to Umballah, and his splendid reception by the Viceroy, have so strengthened his hands, that, according to the last advices, his rivals have renounced all further opposition for the present. Thus, although still beset with many difficulties, Shere Ali, avowedly supported by the Indian Government, and by the prestige of its alliance, may now be said to rule over Affghanistan.

CHAPTER VII.

RECENT POLICY OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS AFFGHANISTAN.

In the preceding chapter I have sketched out briefly the varying fortunes of the rival aspirants to the throne of Dost Mahomed in their struggles for power during the last five years—namely, from February 1864 till the spring of the current year. It may not be uninteresting to show clearly what has been the attitude of the Indian Government towards the rival factions in Affghanistan during the above period.

As is well known, the policy of 'masterly inactivity' in Central Asian affairs has always been violently assailed by many writers, and has often been sneered at as being no policy at all. The arguments that have been adduced by many writers to show how dangerous and suicidal this course of policy was, might be repeated almost to any length; while, on the other hand, Lord Lawrence was supported throughout in his policy by some of the most influential organs of the English press. Even now, when the policy of non-intervention and neutrality in the affairs of Affghanistan has been reversed, it is asserted by many that the Indian Government, in assisting Shere Ali to maintain himself on his father's throne, has only done now what ought to have been done some four or five years ago. Assertions such as these are easily made by irresponsible writers who are wise by the light of recent events,

but such statements do not necessarily carry much weight with them. It would be idle to embark now upon the discussion of this vexed question, but it may be remarked that a knowledge of a few plain facts will at any rate exonerate the Indian Government from the charge of having had no policy, or an inconsistent one; for the truth is that its policy, whatever may have been its merits or demerits, has from the first been clear, simple, and perfectly defined.

It was of course much desired by each faction in Affghanistan during their late contest for supremacy, to gain the support of so powerful a neighbour as the Indian Government, and for several obvious reasons. The Affghan princes doubtless remembered the subsidy of 10,000*l.* per month that had for some time been paid to their father Dost Mahomed; and in greedy Affghan eyes, one of the chief prospective merits of an English alliance was that it would probably involve the receipt of a large monthly subsidy. Secondly, the reputation of being the recognised ally of the Indian Government, and of being supported by it, would naturally have added greatly to the prestige of the side that could secure such an advantage, to the exclusion of all other rivals and pretenders. This advantage, it may be remarked, Shere Ali had enjoyed during the first period of his struggle to maintain himself on his father's throne, for soon after his accession he was formally recognised by the Indian Government as rightful Ameer. As, however, in the course of the civil wars that have raged in Affghanistan during the last five years, Afzul Khan, and after him Azim Khan, were both successively recognised by the Viceroy as the *de facto* rulers of the country, it will be well to relate briefly the exact course of policy adopted by the said Government.

As just stated, a few months after the death of Dost Mahomed, Shere Ali was formally recognised as rightful Ameer of Affghanistan. In February 1866, Azim Khan gained possession of Cabul, and Afzul Khan was raised to kingly power in the following May. No sooner did the former, who really ruled the State, find himself at the head of affairs, than he began to try to lure the Indian Government from its recognition of Shere Ali's right to the throne. With the mingled shallowness and cunning that seems to be inseparable from Oriental diplomacy, he thought that he could easily work upon England's well-known distrust of the advance of Russia towards Affghanistan, and turn it to his own advantage.* With this object in view, he took care to rail repeatedly in open court against the English, and to give out publicly that he was about to enter into an alliance with Russia. When he thought that the rumour of his intention had reached the ears of the Indian Government, and taken its intended effect, he made overtures of amity through the Indian moonshee at his court to the Viceroy. Finding, however, that his proposals were not responded to with the eagerness he had hoped for, he was obliged to desist for a time. When, however, his troops defeated those of Shere Ali at Shekhabad, in May 1866, he renewed his attempts to effect his object. He first made offers to bring about a definitive alliance between England and Bokhara against Russia. Finding that Lord Lawrence turned a deaf ear to his representations of the expediency of this measure, he threw out threats of leading a fanatical descent upon British territory. This was, of course, simply laughable. 'Foiled at all points, Azim Khan was in the end obliged to

* This playing off of Russia against England, and *vice versâ*, is an old manœuvre of the Affghan princes, which was tried some thirty years ago. See 'Quarterly Review' of 1839, vol. lxiv. p. 167.

have recourse to a more straightforward proceeding. He caused a letter to be written in the name of the titular Ameer, Afzul Khan, to the Governor-General, making a plain demand for the friendship of the British Government.'* In a letter addressed to Afzul Khan as Walee (i.e. ruler, and not Ameer) of Cabul, dated July 11, 1866, Lord Lawrence answered this communication. After expressing his regret that dissensions had arisen among the various members of the Barukzye family, the Viceroy declared it to be his wish that friendship between the two Governments should be perpetuated. As regarded Afzul Khan's demand for an alliance, he said that it would be inconsistent with the fame and reputation of the Indian Government to break off its alliance with Shere Ali, who would continue to be recognised as Ameer of that part of Affghanistan over which he still retained control. The Viceroy added, moreover, that as the relations of his Government were with the actual rulers of Affghanistan, if Afzul Khan was able to consolidate his power in Cabul, he would be happy to recognise him as its ruler. Azim Khan was somewhat disconcerted at this reply, but in the end of November 1866 he made a third attempt to carry his point. Soon after the news of the capture of Djuzak and other Russian successes reached Affghanistan, he expressed his fears to the Indian moonshee at Cabul that the Russians would soon extend their conquests to the Oxus, and advance into Balkh, and that it was therefore necessary that the British and Affghan Governments should concert measures to repel any such attempt. To this it was replied, on the part of the Indian Government, that the British and Russian Governments were on most friendly terms, and that there was no reason to fear that the latter had any wish to molest England or her allies.

* 'Edinburgh Review,' January 1867, art. 'Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence,' p. 33.

In January 1867 was fought the battle of Kelat-i-Ghilzie, which has been recorded in the preceding chapter; and on February 3, Afzul Khan wrote letters announcing his victory to the Viceroy. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab was authorised to congratulate him under the title of Ameer of Cabul and Candahar. Shortly after, on February 25, the Viceroy himself wrote to Afzul Khan, and took occasion once more to define the position of the Indian Government towards the rival princes of Affghanistan. Afzul Khan was informed that, as long as Shere Ali continued to rule in Herat, he would be recognised as ruler of that country, and his amity would be reciprocated; but, on the same principle, that Afzul Khan should be recognised as ruler of Cabul and Candahar. In the same letter, moreover, Afzul Khan was assured of the falseness of the rumours that had reached the Cabul durbar to the effect that assistance had been granted to Shere Ali by the Indian Government. In conclusion, the Viceroy announced his intention of adhering to the same policy of rigid non-intervention that he had hitherto observed.

When, on the death of Afzul Khan in October 1867, Azim Khan succeeded to the Ameership, he did not announce the fact of his brother's death, or of his own accession, to the Indian Government. After waiting for some time in expectation that he would do so, the Viceroy, in a letter dated November 13, after offering his condolences on the death of his brother, congratulated him on his accession to the Ameership.

Azim Khan did not reply to this letter, but during his reign he took care to continue to make a parade of his intention (in default of British aid) to enter into a defensive alliance with Russia. This was of course done with the view of extorting assistance from the supposed fears of the Indian Government.

Such, as taken from official and authentic sources, were the solicitations and manœuvres of Azim Khan (first in the name of his brother, and afterwards in his own) to enlist the sympathy and assistance of the Indian Government in his behalf. It remains briefly to relate the counter-solicitations made by Shere Ali during the same period.

After the capture of Cabul by Azim Khan and Abdul Rahman in February 1866, and the subsequent installation of Afzul Khan as Ameer in the following May, the ex-Ameer Shere Ali was naturally most anxious to learn what was the attitude which the Indian Government were likely to adopt towards his successful rivals. On August 28, 1866, a letter was received from him by the Indian news-writer at the court of Cabul, and forwarded on to the Indian Government.* In this letter Shere Ali, after referring to a former request that he had made for money and arms, begged that 6,000 muskets and a suitable sum of money might be sent to him at once, as they were urgently required. To this request it was replied by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, on the part of the Indian Government, that, as the desire of the Government to see the members of the Barukzye family reconciled was thoroughly sincere, and that, as it was neither the wish nor the interest of the said Government that the Affghan nation should be weakened by internal dissensions, the request contained in the ex-Ameer's letter was not one that could be acceded to.

After the battle of Kelat-i-Ghilzie, an envoy named Shere Ali, who had been Governor of Candahar, and who was a namesake of the ex-Ameer his master, arrived at Kurrachee with a letter asking for assistance. In reply, the contents of the Viceroy's letter to Afzul Khan, dated February 25, 1867 (a summary of which has already been given) were

* This letter was at first supposed by the Commissioner of Peshawur to be a forgery; it turned out afterwards, however, to be genuine.

explained to the envoy, and a copy of it was given to him. The envoy said, in reply, that the circumstances of Shere Ali were desperate, and that if he could not obtain assistance from the Indian Government, he must apply to Persia or Russia, as he was determined to recover the sovereignty of Affghanistan. When the star of Shere Ali's good fortune was again in the ascendant, and he regained possession of Cabul in the summer of 1868, he renewed his applications for assistance on the ground that both his father and he had long been recognised as the allies of England. From this time seems to date the turning-point in the policy of the Indian Government. Up to this point non-intervention had been consistently adhered to. But in politics, more perhaps than in anything else, circumstances alter cases, and it is evident that a change of opinion had been taking place in the councils of the Indian Government. What were the precise reasons for such a change it is impossible for any outside writer to say. The general tenor of them, however, may easily be guessed at.

The capture of Samarkand by the Russians last summer; their advance last autumn, nearly a hundred miles farther south to Karshi, and their temporary occupation of that city; the certainty that Affghanistan, while it continued a prey to anarchy, would offer an easy field for the intrigues of Russia (supposing that Power to have any designs upon the country); the openly-expressed opinion of many able men as to the impolicy of letting the Affghan princes, despite their preference for an English alliance, drift into the arms of Russia: all these facts and considerations doubtless contributed to reverse the policy hitherto pursued, and to induce the Government to accede at last to Shere Ali's requests for assistance. The course adopted by it on the receipt of this last application may be given on the best possible authority—namely, in Lord Lawrence's own words,

who, in reference to this subject, on the 19th of last April, spoke as follows in the House of Lords :—

'Each party was sufficiently strong to maintain itself against the other, but neither party was strong enough to beat down the other and restore order. There was a general feeling that we should come forward to assist the Ameer, who had partially recovered his authority, to consolidate his power, and put down further opposition. The Ameer sent most pressing invitations to the British Government, entreating them to give him aid. After considerable reflection and some hesitation, I at last brought the matter before my Council, and after fully debating all the *pros* and *cons* of the question, it was unanimously decided by us that it would be expedient to give the Ameer some assistance, with a view of affording him a chance of recovering his power, and of bringing back peace and order to the country. Accordingly, I sent him something like 60,000*l.*, and I told him, further, that if this money did not suffice I would give him a further supply, and would also aid to a certain extent in the maintenance of a standing army. He replied most gratefully, and desired to come down and pay his respects to the British Government, to enter into a treaty with them, as his father had done, and to maintain friendly relations with them. It was considered by the Government of India that overtures of this kind ought not to pass unnoticed, and I thereupon wrote to the Ameer, and told him what were my views—that I was willing to help him still further in a moderate way, that I could not bind myself by any treaty which would involve obligations on the part of Her Majesty's Government to assist him, but that I was willing from time to time, as circumstances might suggest, and as his own conduct might show that he deserved it, to give him some further assistance hereafter, as I had already done. Things remained in that state until the period of my service

as Governor-General came to an end. I then placed on record my reasons for having made this arrangement. I suggested that my successor should act on the same policy; that he should make no treaty or arrangement by which we should be bound in any way, directly or indirectly, to interfere in the affairs of Affghanistan; but until the Ameer should recover his authority, and consolidate his authority, that we might from time to time assist him. I believe Lord Mayo has done no more than act on the principles I suggested; I believe there is no intention and no desire to do otherwise, but quite the contrary; and I believe it is the wish of the Government in India and of Lord Mayo to pursue a course strictly in accordance with that hitherto adopted. It must be admitted that we owe the Affghans a debt of gratitude; and if we can, by a moderate outlay, by the expenditure of a few thousands, conciliate them—if we can lead them to forget the misfortunes and the wars of the past, induce them to become good neighbours on our borders, and make them believe that we are really and truly their friends, that will be a great gain; and I think nothing has been done inconsistent with the attainment of that desirable object.'

Such, then, has been the policy pursued towards Affghanistan. In the face of these facts it is strange to see some of the leading journals persist in declaring that the previous policy of the Indian Government has not been at all changed by thus aiding Shere Ali, and that it is only a continuation of that which has been pursued for the past five years. The real fact is, that a rigid neutrality in the affairs of Affghanistan was consistently adhered to until the end of last year. At that time, when the progress of events dictated the expediency of active interference, the previous inaction of the Government was wisely reversed. It is still an open question whether Shere Ali would not have been able

to serve our interests more effectually if in the commencement of his troubles he had been supported by English money and arms. In that case, it is maintained, England would have had a more powerful, because a less impoverished ally, and therefore one more able to further English interests, should occasion require his services and co-operation. Upon both sides of this question much might be said, but it would serve no good purpose to discuss these points now.* There are, however, one or two other points to which attention may be drawn. Now that the Indian Government is fairly committed to the support of Shere Ali, it is well to realise the fact that such support, once openly accorded, entails certain grave responsibilities, and that it will be impossible for the said Government to halt half-way in the new policy adopted towards Affghanistan. It is idle to assert, as has been so often done of late, that Shere Ali is to be assisted up to a certain point and no farther. It would be obviously most impolitic to permit this ruler, to whom, in the face of all Asia, our support has been accorded, to be again worsted by his rivals and driven from his throne, or forced to take refuge in exile. In that case, not only would the national prestige receive a heavy blow, but the money and arms supplied to the Ameer would have been simply thrown away. Hence, in a common sense point of view, it is clear that regard for England's reputation, as well as prudence and economy, require that Shere Ali should now, at all costs and all hazards, be maintained firmly on the throne of Affghanistan.

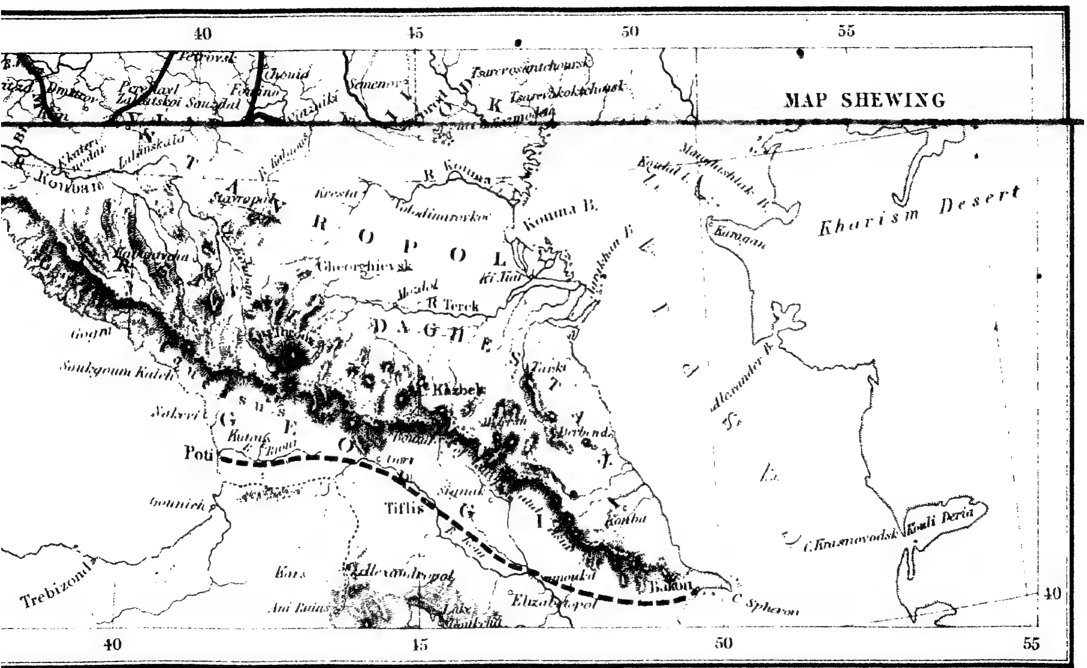
* I must refer those of my readers who may wish to see the policy of the Indian Government in this matter considered from a hostile point of view, to 'The Oxus and the Indus,' by Major Evans Bell. Trübner & Co., 1869. In this book Lord Lawrence and his Affghanistan policy are denounced and assailed from beginning to end.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRATEGICAL ASPECT OF THE RUSSO INDIAN QUESTION.

IT will probably be acknowledged by all who profess any acquaintance with the subject, that there can be no comparison at present between the military power and resources of England and India and those which Russia could exert on the Oxus. In the event, therefore, of a war breaking out in the present day between Russia and England, it is hardly possible that an invasion of, or even hostile demonstration against India would be attempted by the former, for as yet it could scarcely be made with any prospect of success. Central Asian politicians of the optimist and quietist school are apt to take comfort from these considerations, and are wont to assure those who place implicit confidence in their statements that there can never be any cause for disquiet or uneasiness from the proximity of Russia to India. It might indeed be supposed, from listening to the arguments that are so often adduced in support of this view, that the relative position of the two Powers would always remain *in statu quo*, and that the newly-acquired provinces of Turkestan would ever be as isolated as they are undoubtedly at present from European Russia. It might be imagined that this close neighbourhood of the two frontiers was but a thing of to-day or to-morrow, and not likely to endure for all time to come. Those, however, who prefer to think for themselves, instead of allowing their political Mentors to think for them, will look at the future aspect of the question, and will see no use in

MAP SHEWING



40
45
50
55
Petrovsk
Chouia
Semenov
Tsarevokoktchaisk
Koubau
Stavropol
Kresta
R Kouma
Kouma B.
R O P O L
Gheorghievsk
R Terek
D A G H E S T A N
Kazbek
Tarki
Derbend
Kouba
Bakou
C. Spheron
Poti
Tiflis
Soukgoum Kaleh
Kars
Ani Ruins
Elizabetopol
Trebizond
Kharism Desert
Karagan
C. Krasnovodsk
Kouli Deria
Stanford's Geog¹ Estab¹ Charing Cross

shutting their eyes to a danger which, although as yet remote, will even in five or six years' time present a very different aspect. The principal feature in the change which will in the course of the next five years be wrought in the relative positions of England and Russia in Asia will consist in the vast increase of the power and resources of the latter for offensive action. This change, it need hardly be said, will be brought about by the development of Russia's internal lines of communication, which will have the effect of nullifying the vast distances between her outlying provinces and the civilised heart of her empire.

It will be advisable, therefore, in discussing this question, to devote a chapter to its strategical aspect, or, in other words, briefly to consider, leaving out all vague suppositions and unfounded speculations, and, without going too minutely into details, what are the future resources that Russia, in all human probability, would be able to bring to bear upon the conduct of such an enterprise as a hostile demonstration against India; the conditions under which her troops could best undertake military operations; the principal roads and strategical points that they would endeavour to avail themselves of, and their distances one from another; the nearest points to our Indian frontier up to which Russian railway and river transport is, or will soon be available; and such-like obvious points as would naturally suggest themselves to any soldier entrusted with the direction of such an enterprise. In discussing these points there is no wish to impute any treacherous designs to Russia, or to assume, as a matter of course, that she has any intention of ever invading India, for that, it need hardly be said, is open to great doubt. The object is rather to look the future aspect of the question fairly in the face, and to see to what extent it will be in the power of Russia so to make use of her proximity to India as to be a thorn in England's side. First, as to the question

of railways. As, in the event of its being the object of Russia to threaten the Indian frontier, her primary base of operations would be in Russia itself, and therefore very far off, it is necessary to examine to what degree present and future railways and steam navigation are likely to nullify the vast distances that would have to be traversed ere a Russian force could be concentrated on the banks of the Oxus or on the frontiers of Western Affghanistan. In reference to this subject it should be borne in mind that in all the wars that Russia has hitherto waged, she has never been able, owing to the vast extent of her dominions, to put forth more than half her real strength, inasmuch as from the want of railway communication she has been unable to grasp the advantages that the power of being able rapidly to concentrate her troops would have given her. Her armies have in fact been swallowed up in long marches, and in the vast distances which they have had to traverse. But the energy and rapidity with which Russian railways have during the last ten years been pushed forward have already in great measure removed this disadvantage in Europe, and will soon do so in her Asiatic provinces also. It may therefore be fairly assumed that in any future campaign Russia will be able to double or treble the forces she has hitherto been able to bring together into the field.

There are, as has been repeatedly pointed out of late, three main routes, more or less practicable, by which a Russian force could at present advance towards India, viz. the route from the north along the line of the Syr-Daria through Russian Turkestan, and across the Hindoo-Koosh. Secondly, the Eastern route from Astrabad *viâ* Meshed, Herat, and Candahar. Thirdly, the Eastern Turkestan route, as it may be termed, through Eastern Turkestan across the Kara-Korum range. This latter route may be entirely dismissed from consideration as being impracticable, for several reasons,

the chief of which would be the sterility of the country through which an army would have to pass.

There remain, then, the northern and the eastern routes. Before a force starting from European Russia could advance by either of these routes, the Caspian Sea would of course have to be crossed, either in the north, as, for instance, from Astrakhan to Mertvi Bay, or in the south, from Bakou to Astrabad. How far, then, do present and future Russian railways facilitate the transport of Russian troops to the western shores of the Caspian?

I propose to take the northern route first, and to show what sort of a route it is likely to be (if Russian plans at present in course of execution are brought to a successful issue) some seven or eight years hence.

The great natural highway leading from the heart of Russia to Western Asia is the Volga, on which any number of Russian steamers ply between Nijni Novgorod (which is connected by railway with Moscow) and Astrakhan, the great northern port of the Caspian Sea. The course of the river is very circuitous, and any lines of railway connecting Moscow and other principal towns of Central and Southern Russia directly with the Volga, especially near its mouth, would of course greatly expedite the transport of troops to the shores of the Caspian. According to a statement taken from a last December number of the Russian 'Viest,' there are now three lines branching off from the already finished line which runs south-east from Moscow to Voronej,* *viâ* Riazan and Koslov, one of which will cross, and the other two terminate on the Volga at points below Nijni Novgorod. Of these lines the most southerly will be from Griaz, a station between Koslov and Voronej, to Borisoglebsk, and thence to Kamychin, a town upon the Volga, about 450 versts (i.e. 300 miles) from its mouth. North of this branch there will

* Voronej is written 'Woronetz' in most maps.

be one from Koslov to Saratov, on the Volga, which will pass through Tambov. The third will run from Riazan to Morschansk and thence to the Volga to a point opposite Samara, from whence it will be continued to Orenberg. The first-mentioned of these lines, viz. from Griaz to Borisoglebsk, is to be ready by the end of the current year; the second, from Koslov to Saratov, is also to be open as far as Tambov within the same period. This will leave the portion between Tambov and Saratov, which is rather more than 200 miles (340 versts), to be completed. As regards the third, it is already open as far as Morschansk.

Thus it will be seen, by a reference to the accompanying map, that in the course of four or five years at the most, there will be three lines of railway connecting Moscow with the Volga far below Nijni Novgorod, viz. at Saratov, Samara, and Kamychin, and that by means of these lines and the Volga steamers, Russia would have no difficulty, as far as means of locomotion are concerned, in transporting any force she chose to any point on the eastern shores of the Caspian—such as, for instance, Mertvi Bay.

Here there is a break in the water communication between Nijni Novgorod and Russian Turkestan, inasmuch as an expanse of barren steppe, nearly 250 miles wide,* called the Ust Urt, intervenes between the Caspian and the Aral Seas. But most important steps are being taken to connect these two inland seas by means of a railway across the Ust Urt. It appears from General Romanovski's book, published last year, that preparations were then in progress for the construction of a railway, which is to run from Mertvi Bay, which is the most northerly bay on the eastern shore of the Caspian to Tchernikeff Bay, on the western shore of the

* General Romanovski, in his book, states the distance across the Ust Urt to the Aral Sea from the Caspian to be only 200 miles, but according to most recent maps it must be somewhat more.

Aral. Since the publication of the above book, a statement appeared in the 'Golos' of St. Petersburg in February last, in which it was stated that, 'on the proposition of the Minister of Public Works, the Emperor has accorded to Messrs. Koüi Lazareff and Miller the necessary authorisation to proceed with the levelling and other works required for a railway between the Caspian Sea and Lake Aral.' There can of course be no question but that this is a purely military line, inasmuch as it will run through an almost uninhabited region throughout its whole course. As regards the physical difficulties or facilities of this proposed route, it would be useless to discuss them here, inasmuch as a contract has been entered into by the Russian Government for the construction of the line, and therefore it may be assumed that the project has been found quite practicable. At any rate, the fact to be weighed is that in four or five years the line will, in all human probability, be a *fait accompli.*

From Tchernikeff Bay, on the western shore of the Aral, there is unbroken water communication for steam transports up the Syr-Daria as far as Khodjend, which is but a few marches from Samarkand. As soon, therefore, as the Ust Urt line of railway is finished,* and the difficulties that still impede the navigation of the Syr-Daria in some places have been overcome, it is evident that all the old stock arguments that have always been adduced (and which have hitherto been to a great extent true), as to the desperate nature of a march through the sands, snows, and steppes of Central Asia, will vanish at once, for by the route traced out troops could be moved from the heart of Russia to the most southerly point of Russian Turkestan by steam transport, without any fear of molestation, as the way throughout

* The insurrection said to have lately broken out against Russian rule on the Kirghiz steppes will probably have the effect of expediting the construction of this line.

will lie through Russian territory. Taking these facts into consideration, I cannot agree with Major-General Sir Vincent Eyre, who, in an interesting pamphlet,* lately published, concerning passing events in Central Asia, says that 'the position of the Russian forces scattered far and wide over Central Asia (and not exceeding 20,000 men of all arms, according to the most recent authentic accounts) must necessarily *for generations to come* be very far from secure.' The real fact seems to be that in half-a-dozen years or so, the transport of troops and munitions of war between Moscow and Samarkand will be as safe and as quick as at present it is between London and Bombay, as a month will in each case suffice for the journey between either of these points.

There is another railway (supplementary to the above route) which is already spoken of in General Romanovski's book and in the Russian journals as being in contemplation. If it is found to be feasible, and is carried into execution, the present circuitous route by the Syr-Daria to Russian Turkestan from the Caucasus, or Southern Russia, will be very much shortened.

This proposed route is a railway from Krasnovodsk Bay, on the eastern shore of the Caspian, along the old bed of the Oxus to its present mouth.

This road is said by General Romanovski to recommend itself by the even surface of the soil and other circumstances of a similar nature. In the following extract from the 'Moscow Gazette,' published during last January, the project is discussed, and attention is called to the great advantages that would accrue to the Russian trading community from its adoption.

* 'A Retrospect of the Affghan War, with reference to passing events in Central Asia,' by Major-General Sir Vincent Eyre, K.C.S.I.C.B., 1869. (Page 29, para. 48.)

'Now that our merchants have been permitted to trade and settle in Bokhara, they are sure to abandon the roundabout route by the river Syr, and to effect direct communication with Russia by the Amu-Daria and the Krasnovodsk Bay of the Caspian Sea. From Bokhara to Krasnovodsk Bay the distance is less than 1,000 versts, while Bokhara and Orenberg, by the route of the Syr-Daria, are fully 1,700 versts asunder—a disadvantage heightened by the long land transport from Orenberg to Samara (on the Volga). The Caspian, then, not the Aral, is the natural outlet for the trade of the Syr-Daria and Amu-Daria (Oxus) valleys. Bokhara no longer offers any impediments to the selection of this new and much more eligible route. As for Khiva, its sovereign has long realised the advantage of being on good terms with Russia.'

Thus it can hardly be doubted that as far as means of transport and locomotion are concerned, Russia, even it her Turkestan frontier remains *in statu quo*, will, a few years hence, have no difficulty whatever in concentrating with safety and expedition a large force at Samarkand, or even some eighty-five miles farther south, at Karshi, which is the most southerly point which the Russians have yet reached. Starting from Samarkand, a Russian force would still have rather over 800 miles, and the greater part of it a most impracticable country, to traverse before reaching Peshawur, *viâ* Balkh and Cabul.

The distances on this route are as follows:—*

	Miles.
Samarkand to Balkh	260
Balkh to Bamian	250
Bamian to Cabul	107
Cabul to Peshawur	190
Total	807

* These distances, as well as many of those in the present chapter, are taken from 'Routes in the Bengal Presidency,' an official work, a copy

This northern route as far as the Oxus, at any rate, will always be Russia's most secure and quickest route towards India. But it will only be so up to this point, for it is here that the real difficulties of an invading force would begin. Fortunately, there is no doubt that these difficulties would be very great. This branch of the question will be noticed hereafter.

Having traced the future northern route from Moscow to Samarkand, which, while the Russian boundary-line remains *in statu quo*, is the nearest point to the Indian frontier at which a Russian force or 'army of observation' could be concentrated in its own territory, it is now necessary to turn for a short time to the eastern route, viz. that by Astrabad, Herat, and Candahar. This route, which is by far the most practicable for the march of an army, I propose briefly to examine up to the same point as the northern route, i.e. the nearest point to the Indian frontier at which a Russian force could be concentrated without transgressing Russian boundaries. This point is of course the port of Astrabad, on the south-eastern corner of the Caspian.

In considering this route it is necessary to examine how the railway system of Southern Russia five years hence will facilitate the transport of troops from the Caucasus, which is one of the great centres of Russian military power, to the western shores of the Caspian. According to the extract from the Russian 'Viest,' which I have already referred to, among the projected lines of Russia which are to be commenced at once is one from Poti, on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, to Tiflis, just to the south of the Caucasus, and

of which is furnished to every British regiment serving in India. The routes in the said book are compiled from information in the office of the Quarter-Master-General of the Army at Calcutta, and are detailed *in extenso*, march by march, with a description of each day's encamping-ground, and of the resources of each halt as to water-carriage and supplies, with description of road, &c.

from thence to Bakou on the western shore of the Caspian, nearly opposite Karabugas Gulf. When this line is completed, there will be railway communication between the Black and Caspian Seas. That the army of the Caucasus, which is about 150,000 strong, is looked upon by Russian military men as the grand reserve which, in any future enterprise, either in Eastern Europe or Western and Central Asia, will supply the most seasoned and best disciplined troops, is evident from some letters written by the Russian General Fadeieff, dated from Tiflis, which were published in the 'Moscow Gazette' some three years ago.* The same views are expressed by General Romanovski, in his book entitled 'Notes on the Central Asian Question,' who says: 'In future the Caucasus will be regarded by our generals as the reserve of the Turkestan force, and being always so strong, it can easily miss some battalions without injury to the service entrusted to it. Its sphere of action will in fact extend to both countries alike.' He goes on to say, 'Experience has shown that at present it takes two years to march a body of troops from the Volga to Turkestan, but after the construction of the new roads a few weeks will suffice.'

By this route, then, the Russians will have no difficulty, with a little previous preparation, in despatching a force from Tiflis, and concentrating it in the Bay of Astrabad. A week or ten days at the most would be ample time for the operation.

When this first step, viz. the disembarkation of a body of troops at Astrabad, had been effected, a Russian force would still find itself between 1,300 and 1,400 miles from the frontiers of India, by the most direct route. The distances are as follows:—

* Many of these letters were translated into French and English for the Foreign Office.

	Miles.
Astrabad to Herat	580
Herat to Candahar, by nearest route . .	369
Candahar to the Indus (about) . .	400
Total	1349

Thus it will be seen, by the eastern and northern routes—the only ones by which Russia could advance upon India—her forces would have a march before them of 1,350 miles in the one case, and of more than 800 miles in the other. It is not my intention to examine these routes in detail, even as far as the present information available about them might permit. The subject has been worn almost threadbare of late, and therefore it would be difficult to say anything about them that has not been represented time after time. It is my object, moreover, chiefly to confine attention in the following pages to another phase of the question, which, though important enough in itself, falls far short of an invasion of India. I shall therefore content myself with a few brief general remarks.

The eastern route from Astrabad, despite its length, might very possibly be practicable enough as far as Candahar for a very considerable force. As regards the active opposition of the people through whose countries a Russian invading force would have to pass, neither by the eastern route nor by that from the north-west would there be any obstacle to which a decently equipped force need give a moment's thought. But the many risks and perils attending such an enterprise; the distances to be traversed; the great difficulty of maintaining sufficient transport for the wants of a European army; the desert and inhospitable nature of portions of the country through which a force would have to pass; especially by the route from the north; the desperate nature of the contest that would await a Russian army, even if it did arrive at the banks of the Indus; the easy fields of conquest that

are open to Russian arms in other parts of Asia—all these facts and considerations, which have of late been so fully discussed, go far to prove that the anti-Russophobists and quietists (who number so many able men among their ranks) are perfectly right when they acquit Russia of harbouring, as yet, any such mad design as the direct invasion of India, and when they assure us that even if she ever did make the attempt, England need not have much fear as to the result. In reply to all this, the advocates of alarmist views are wont to answer, that Central Asia, so far from being an impracticable country for military operations, is a vast arena, through which armies have marched and countermarched since the earliest times of which we have any authentic historical record; and that though doubtless there are wide deserts in some places, yet there are many fertile oases adjacent to each other, and that by keeping to the routes which pass through these more favoured tracts, armies have often advanced to India, and may therefore do so again. In support of these views, they quote the successful expeditions to India of Mahmood of Ghizni, of Timour,* of Baber, and of Nadir Shah, besides others of lesser note. Adducing the success of these invaders as precedents to show the feasibility of the attempt, the alarmists are fond of picturing a large host of 40,000 or 50,000 Russians, with a countless horde of native auxiliaries, as being ready at no very distant date to descend upon our Indian frontier. Those who hold these views do not pause to explain how such a vast host could be fed and maintained for a single week while marching even in the best cultivated districts of Central Asia. They naturally do not think it necessary to enter upon a discussion of this important point, as they maintain that the countries through which an army must pass *en route* to India have

* Tamerlane, as Timour is often called, is only a corruption of Timour-lung, i.e. Timour the lame.

at least the same resources for the maintenance of troops in the present day as they formerly possessed. These arguments are specious and plausible enough at first sight, but a little examination and knowledge of the subject will show a most essential point of difference in the parallel sought to be established, that makes the comparison, for purposes of argument, worth nothing at all. The armies which in former times successfully marched through Central Asia upon India were irregular Asiatic armies; and to anyone who knows anything of the nature, organisation, and habits of such forces, it must be clear that there can be no analogy between their requirements, or the conditions necessary to ensure their success, and those of a well-equipped European force in modern times. In the first place, the great bulk of the armies of these conquerors were irregular horsemen, who generally marched thirty or forty miles a day, and who when passing through a desert or scantily supplied country were capable, as they are now, of doing as much as fifty miles a day.* They carried with them no tents, stores, heavy artillery, or provisions, they had no organised commissariat, with its long line of waggons to be dragged over indifferent roads, no hospital establishments, none of the cumbersome impedimenta that are indispensable to a modern army (especially a European one, marching in a tropical country) and to the conduct of a campaign. As is still generally the case in all purely Asiatic armies, each man was an expert forager,

* As an instance of the rate at which their regular Asiatic armies of former days were capable of marching, may be mentioned the feat of Timour, who, with a countless horde of warriors, on March 5, 1393, marched eighty miles without a halt, and swam the Tigris to the capture of Baghdad. See 'Histoire de Timour,' by De la Croix, p. 266. The Pindarees in India may be said to have sometimes almost equalled this feat, and, coming down to quite recent times, there is no doubt that in the Indian mutiny, the rebel forces under Tantia Topee sometimes marched forty or fifty miles a day.

and catered for himself and his horse; and though, owing to a want of system in the collection of provisions, much waste inevitably took place, yet the amount obtained by each man, even in the more sparsely inhabited districts, sufficed for his own immediate wants. Owing to the rapidity with which they could march, they were enabled to pass through regions where provisions were scarce in one or two days at the most, each man carrying as much food for himself and his horse behind his saddle as sufficed to support them both, till places were reached where supplies were more abundant. In most cases, moreover, the countries through which these hordes passed *en route* to India were inhabited by men of the same creed and customs as themselves, and they consequently felt at home wherever they went.

As illustrative of these facts, it may be adduced that one of the armies of Mahmood of Ghizni, who repeatedly invaded India in the beginning of the eleventh century, consisted of 100,000 horsemen and only 30,000 infantry. With this army he advanced from the north of India, and is said to have *surprised* the city of Kanouj. Considering that this famous old city, which is now mainly in ruins, is situated about two miles from the banks of the Ganges, in 27° 3′ N. lat., and in 80° 13′ E. long., this army must certainly have swept over the intervening country from Cashmere—the point where it descended into the plains of India—at a tremendous pace, and it is clear that nothing but an irregular cavalry force could have performed the feat.

Again, the Emperor Baber, the famous founder of the Moghul dynasty, in the year 1526, marched from Cabul, surprised and took Delhi with a force of about 12,000 men, which was composed almost exclusively of cavalry.* Once

* 'Life of Baber,' by R. M. Caldecott. Edinburgh, 1844, p. 179. This fact is significant, as showing the weakness of the Governments of India at that time.

more; Nadir Shah, in his famous invasion of India in the middle of the eighteenth century, certainly seems to have taken with him what was then considered a strong train of artillery; but after he reached Cabul he had little use for his infantry, for, according to Sir John Malcolm, his 'progress from Cabul to India was rapid and successful; almost all the governors of the provinces through which he passed anticipated the fate of the empire by their submission.'*

It must be borne in mind, moreover, that the States which these invaders attacked were weak, and often at feud with each other; their inhabitants were inferior, not only in military skill and organisation, but also in individual prowess and physical courage, to the invaders. They consequently, in many cases, fell an easy prey to the fierce hosts that swept down like a whirlwind from beyond the mountains in the north-west over the plains—the mere terror of whose name sufficed in many cases to ensure the submission without a struggle of the chiefs and princes whose territories were overrun. If we contrast all these circumstances with the requirements of a modern European army, and with the state of our present Indian empire, it will be seen, I think, that in this case no analogy can be established between the past and the present, and that the conditions that formerly sufficed to ensure the success of an invading army are totally inapplicable at the present day.

If a Russian army did venture to advance directly upon India without the impedimenta which experience has shown to be necessary to the successful conduct of a campaign in modern warfare, its destruction, whenever it came into contact with an English force, equipped with all requisite implements of war, would be inevitable. Few who have not seen service in the East can form any idea of the baggage-train and establishments necessary for a European force during

* 'History of Persia,' by Sir John Malcolm, vol. ii. p. 25.

prolonged military operations in Asia. No force of European troops, moreover, could possibly accomplish, for a continuance, more than about a third of the distance each day that Asiatic irregular native horsemen could march, and therefore the former would tax in a threefold degree more than the latter the resources of any district that might be scantily furnished with supplies. Much more might be said on this topic, but, from fear of being tedious, I forbear to enlarge upon it further. But, if the idea of a direct Russian invasion of India may be put aside as entirely chimerical, the whole question is by no means disposed of. To anyone who has studied some of the more obviously possible consequences of the proximity of the English and Russian frontiers, it must, I think, be plain that this neighbourhood will involve many contingencies, which, though falling far short of an actual invasion of British territory, English statesmen will find it very difficult to deal with. For instance, in any great question of European diplomacy, in which English interests are opposed to those of Russia, it may at some future time suit the purpose of the latter Power to maintain a threatening attitude on her Turkestan frontier, and with that view she may concentrate an 'army of observation' as near as possible to the British boundary. As I have already endeavoured to show, Russia will have small difficulty, a few years hence, in effecting this object, and such an act would try England in her weakest point, viz. the numerical strength of her English troops, inasmuch as it would force her to keep an enormously increased English force in the Punjab. This obligation would obviously diminish the already small force with which she could take the field in any European campaign. In fact, in such a case, England's right hand would be in a great measure tied. This being so, it is obvious that the stronger the position of Russia in Central Asia, the higher will be the tone she will be able to assume in any question of European diplomacy.

Supposing, then, that at some future time it may suit the cabinet of St. Petersburg to act thus, and that a strong 'corps d'armée' should be concentrated near her Central Asian frontier, the question naturally suggests itself, how could Russia effect her object of seriously menacing, without actually invading, India with the least risk to herself, and in a manner that would entail the heaviest sacrifices on England? One of the most obvious and effectual methods of achieving this object would be as follows. Looking back at the past course of Russian conquest in Turkestan, there is, I think, no great presumption in prophesying that the Oxus will within the next five years be the Russian boundary. This would not involve any great advance on the part of Russia from her present position. From Bokhara to Karshi (which the Russians occupied for a few days last winter) is only eighty-five miles, from Samarkand to Karshi is about ninety-five miles. From Karshi to Kerki on the Oxus is stated by Vambery to be only fourteen miles.* Kerki is a frontier fortress, and is called by the above traveller 'the key of Bokhara on the side of Herat.' When once Russian posts are established on the Oxus as far up the river as this point, or even higher up, Balkh will be within easy reach. Even from Karshi to Balkh is only 175 miles. What is to prevent a Russian commander, if ordered to do so, from seizing Balkh, and pushing on a well-equipped force of some 5,000 or 6,000 men to capture Herat? If any pretext was thought necessary for such a step, it would easily be forthcoming. When Russia's boundary-line is on the Oxus, her frontier will be conterminous with that of Affghanistan. A quarrel might easily be picked, if policy required it, with the reigning prince of that country, and Balkh might suddenly be seized by a Russian force as a 'material guarantee' for

* Mr. Vambery must here mean German geographical miles, which would be equal to about 65 English miles.

the fulfilment of any demands that Russia might choose to make. Again, with regard to Herat, that city at present belongs to Affghanistan, over the whole of which Shere Ali has succeeded for a time, at any rate, in asserting his sway. It is quite possible, however, that at any time in that land of turbulent adventurers, some ambitious chieftain or pretender may throw off his allegiance to his sovereign, make himself master of Herat, and put himself under Russian protection. The Barukzyes and their rule are not loved there, and if recent accounts are to be trusted, the inhabitants would gladly hail an opportunity of throwing off the Affghan yoke.

There can be no doubt, in a military point of view, as to the facility with which a Russian general with 10,000 men, five or six years hence, might execute such a *coup de main* as the seizure of Balkh and Herat; there can be equally little doubt that England will be quite powerless, if her Indian frontier remains the same as at present, to prevent the execution of the project,* which could easily be kept secret till all preparations for it were complete. The more closely the feasibility of this military operation is examined, the more apparent become the ease and safety with which, five or six years hence, it could be carried out by a Russian force having its base at Karshi or on the Oxus. From Balkh to Herat is 370 miles, and the route is divided into twenty-nine easy marches. The road runs in a south-westerly direction

* Mr. Grant Duff, in a chapter on 'Central Asia,' in his very interesting work entitled 'A Political Survey,' says, 'If we are foolish enough ever to allow Russia to possess Herat, we deserve the worst that can happen to us.' He does not, however, explain how he proposes, in the event of a war breaking out between Russia and England, to prevent the seizure of this city by the former Power. On the first outbreak of hostilities, if Russia knew what she was about, it would be the first thing she would attempt, for, strategically speaking, it would be the best move she could make.

through Akchee, Shibberghan, Maimanah, Bala Moorgao, and Kaleh Nooh, a little beyond which point it crosses the only high range of mountains that intervenes by this route between Balkh and Herat. With the exception of four marches, the road is good, level, and practicable for waggons and artillery throughout. Forage, water, and supplies are procurable in tolerable abundance.*

As regards the places *en route* which could be made use of as links in the chain of an army's communication, advancing from Balkh, they are the following :—†

Akchee, forty miles from Balkh. This is described as a large town, containing 4,000–5,000 inhabitants. It is surrounded by a mud wall with a small fort. Supplies are abundant.

Shoobaghan, or Shibberghan, sixty miles from Balkh. A good-sized fort and town, where supplies, water, and forage are plentiful.

Maimanah, or Maymene. A large city, half the size of Cabul.

Bala Moorgao, 230 miles from Balkh, and the twentieth stage from that city. Herat territory is here reached.

Kaleh Nooh, 290 miles from Balkh.

Herat would not probably stand for a week before a decently equipped European army of 6,000 or 7,000 men. The march of a Russian force from Balkh by this route would be perfectly secure, as its left flank, the only side from which it could be in danger of being attacked by a British force from India, would be protected by several mountain ranges. A British force, moreover, wishing to prevent the seizure of Herat, would have about 770 miles to march from the Indus to that city, whereas the Russians, when once at Balkh, would only have 370. Similarly, a

* 'Routes in the Bengal Presidency.'

† See 'Routes in the Bengal Presidency.' Route 'Balkh to Herat.'

Russian force on the Oxus at Kerki* would not be more than about 160 miles from Balkh, whereas the said city is 547 miles from Peshawur, *viâ* Cabul and Bamian. The road, moreover, lies for a great part of the way through a most difficult and impracticable country. But in either of these cases it must be borne in mind that it would be a British, and not a Russian force, that would have to make these long, difficult, and perilous marches. A Russian general's tactics, when once in possession of Balkh and Herat, would be to remain on the defensive, and to employ the two or three months that must necessarily elapse before a British force could arrive to dislodge him, in fortifying both cities, so as to defy all efforts to take them without a regular siege. It is obvious, moreover, that a Russian army in occupation of Herat would lose no time in opening out a line of communication with another supplementary base of operations in its own rear; viz. to Astrabad, *viâ* Meshed. The opening out of this line would strengthen the Russian position greatly, inasmuch as it would connect it with the Caucasus, would furnish a line of supply or retreat, and would render it independent, in a great measure, of its communication with Turkestan.

However loth Persia might be to allow Russian troops to pass through her territories, she is forced for so many reasons to be so utterly subservient to her northern neighbour, that she would not, and indeed, could not raise a finger to oppose their progress. So great, indeed, is this subserviency, that if active assistance were required to be rendered to the Russian troops by Persia, as it doubtless

* If the Oxus could be made use of for navigation from Kerki up the stream, a Russian descent upon Balkh would be greatly facilitated, as the river flows about thirty-five miles to the north of the city. Burnes declares that there would be no difficulty in thus making use of the river, and he says, moreover, that the country bordering the banks possesses abundant materials for the construction of boats, rafts, &c.

would be, the cabinet of St. Petersburg would only have to insist upon the fulfilment of one of the clauses of the treaty of Turkomanchai, concluded in 1827, by virtue of which the Persian Government is bound to provide supplies, *should a Russian army at any time have occasion to march through Persia.**

Though the distance from Astrabad to Herat is great, viz. 580 miles, the routes, according to competent military authorities, are good, with abundance of water throughout. From Astrabad to Meshed, the capital of the province of Khorassan, the roads are two in number, of which the more direct one goes through Sabzapoor and Nishapur, both of which are considerable towns. The more northerly road passes through Shirwan, Birjnoord, and Koochan. From Meshed to Herat there are also three good roads. As regards the capabilities of the country for the maintenance of 6,000 or 7,000 men passing through it, there cannot be

* In connection with this fact, it may be mentioned here that a project was mooted some two or three years ago, of a railway to be constructed by the Persian Government, under Russian auspices, from Astrabad, or from Teheran, to Meshed. It was stated that the Russian Government was most anxious for its construction, in order to facilitate the journey of the large numbers of Russia's Mahomedan subjects who were wont to make yearly pilgrimages to the tomb of the venerated Imam Ali Rezah at Meshed. This circumstance is referred to by M. Vambery in his 'Sketches of Central Asia.' The project seems to have fallen into abeyance for a time, as nothing has of late been heard of it.

Were such a railway ever to be completed for Persia by Russian engineers, it will be seen at once, when the above clause in the treaty of Turcomanchai is borne in mind, how dangerous such a measure would be to the independence of Herat; as it would open out a route by which Russia could at once, in case of hostilities with Affghanistan or with England, transport troops to Meshed, which is distant only 200 miles from the former city. It would of course be very difficult for England to object to Persia's developing the resources of her kingdom by opening out a railway communication to Meshed, which is the capital of the province of Khorassan.

much doubt. In proof of this it may be remarked, that the Persians have never been deterred by difficulties of this kind from marching an army to Herat. When once in that city, the resources of the surrounding country are amply sufficient to maintain a large body of troops. In reference to its capabilities in this respect, a letter from Mr. McNeill, the British Envoy in Persia, in 1838, dated February 23 of that year, contains the following passage :—*

'The fact that the Shah has been able, for above two months, to feed 40,000 men in his camp before Herat, notwithstanding the efforts that were made by the Herat Government to carry off and destroy the supplies which the country afforded, is a proof that an army might move through that country without suffering from want.' If further testimony were needed as to the nature and resources of the plain country around Herat, which has been styled the 'granary of Central Asia,' it is to be found in the report of Major Eldred Pottinger to the Supreme Government of India on the defences of the city, published at Calcutta in July 1840.†

Another case, equally possible half a dozen years hence, may be supposed. A Russian force might advance simultaneously both from Balkh and from Astrabad upon Herat, so that, if the march of one army should be arrested from any cause, the other might surprise and storm the place. There is not much doubt that, if the attempt was successful, the posi-

* 'Foreign Office Correspondence relating to Persia and Affghanistan.' London, 1839.

† A *résumé* of this report is given in Kaye's 'Affghanistan War,' vol. i. p. 213. The route from Astrabad to Herat *viâ* Meshed might of course be much more fully detailed, were it necessary to do so. I believe, however, that the ease with which a European force could march through Northern Persia has never been seriously disputed. The different routes practicable for an army between Astrabad and Herat will be found fully discussed in Ferrier's 'Caravan Journeys.'

tion of a force there could be without much difficulty maintained. There would be two good starting-points or sub-bases of operation, viz. in Southern Turkestan and at Astrabad; there would also be two lines of communication open for retreat, or for the passage of reinforcements, each of which would be perfectly independent of the other. One of them, viz. that by Astrabad and Meshed, would always, so long as Russia is able, from her position, to hold Persia in such subservience, be free from interruption, and available for use. As for any resistance that the Affghans might make, there is not the smallest reason to suppose that the Russians would find them more difficult to deal with than the Bokharians, who it was confidently asserted a few years ago would be found most formidable foes. Even if Russia did not advance a single step beyond Herat for years after she had occupied it, yet the presence of her garrison there would be such a direct menace to India, and would have so injurious an effect on English prestige in Central Asia, that it would impose upon England the burdensome obligation of keeping an immensely increased English force on and near our frontier, and we should never be able to withdraw a single regiment from India, in case its services were required in other parts of the empire.

It can be replied, of course, in answer to all this, that if Russia seized either Balkh or Herat, England would make it an instant *casus belli*. This, doubtless, is true enough; but it is easy to see, in such a case, how the strong points of the position would be in favour of the former Power. If Balkh and Herat were seized under pretext of a quarrel with Affghanistan, Russia would, of course, know perfectly well beforehand that such a direct menace to India would be instantly followed by a demand from England for their evacuation, with the alternative, in case of refusal, of war. Therefore, if she did take these two places, she would take

them suddenly, meaning to keep them at the point of the sword. She would then commence the struggle when already in possession of the disputed points—and possession, of course, in war more than in anything else, is nine points of the law. Moreover, if the time for the seizure of Balkh and Herat was well chosen, viz. in September or in October, no military operations to dislodge the Russian garrisons from either place could be undertaken by England till the following spring; and during the six months that must elapse, the Russian positions at both places might be so strengthened as to defy all our efforts to retake them. These efforts could only be commenced after a long and arduous march. England would doubtless retaliate by extending the area of war to Europe, and would send her fleets to the Baltic and the Black Seas. Here, however, the same argument to a certain extent holds good, for hostile fleets certainly could not be sent to either of these seas, owing to the ice and the severity of the climate, till the spring. The commerce and colonies of England, moreover, furnish so many vulnerable points, that in such a case she would probably be almost as great a loser as her opponent. At any rate, the maritime warfare would not be the one-sided affair it was in 1854–55. Russia would thus, in any case, have six months to prepare herself for the struggle, even after war had been declared. With Herat for a starting-point, it must be remembered, a Russian force could always reach Candahar quite as soon as an English army from India. In fact, the actual distance from Herat to Candahar, by the shorter of the two roads, called the northern route, is 369 miles, which is a less distance than an army from India would have to traverse before reaching the same point.

After weighing all these future possibilities, the question naturally suggests itself, to what conclusion do such considerations as the foregoing lead? When our present

frontier-line in India was taken up, there was no prospect of the future proximity to it of a strong European Power. Strategically, no one, I suppose, would maintain that it has not many weak points, but hitherto it has served our purpose well enough. Many schemes have lately been propounded for its rectification, ranging in scope and aim from a slight advance from our present position (so as to gain possession of the principal passes leading from Affghanistan) up to the immediate occupation of Herat. Some of these projects doubtless present important strategical advantages, but up to the present time any such measure would certainly have been premature, and the Government is understood to be still averse, for good and weighty reasons, to moving a step in advance of its present position.

Regarding, as it has hitherto done, our present boundary as the one to be permanently defended, the Government can scarcely be accused of a lack of foresight in this matter, or of remissness in taking measures to strengthen the north-western frontier. Among the more prominent steps taken with this view, it may be mentioned that Lahore, at the end of the current year, will be in direct railway communication with Calcutta, and also, with the exception of a gap of some 160 miles, with Bombay. Preparations also have for some time past been in progress for connecting Lahore by railway with Peshawur: at this latter place a first-class fortress has long been in course of construction. The whole country, moreover, along our border has been carefully surveyed and mapped out, till every square yard of it is thoroughly known. In addition to this, improved powder-mills, and manufactories for cartridges and other warlike stores, are either completed or in course of erection in different parts of India, while no pains are spared to keep the Indian frontier forces in a state of efficiency.

Looking, however, at the future aspect of the question, it will certainly in the course of the next few years have to be decided whether it is not expedient to rectify our present boundary-line (however unpalatable such a measure may be), and to take up a position that will enable us to look with comparative indifference on any advance of Russia to the south of the Oxus. What this precise position will be it is obviously impossible to foretell, and it would therefore perhaps be only a waste of time to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of any particular line of defence. There is, however, one great strategical point which must in any case necessarily form the key of any advanced position in Affghanistan which the Indian Government may hereafter see fit to occupy. I refer, of course, to Candahar. Herat has so often been declared to be the gate of India, that the saying has almost passed into a proverb. But on examination, this saying, like many another well-worn and generally-accepted phrase, is found to be true only in a partial and qualified sense. Herat is the gate of India only in so far as it is the key of Affghanistan from the west, and it is only through that country that Candahar, which is the real gate of India, can be approached.

Speaking from a strategical, though not a political point of view, so long as a British garrison occupied a strong fortress at Candahar, we might look with comparative indifference upon the occupation by Russian troops of Herat. Their presence there would entail upon us the obligation of a constant watch on our frontier, and a largely-increased military expenditure; but while we held Candahar, no attempt could ever be made with much chance of success against India.

The chief reasons that make this city so important are as follows:—It commands the three roads to India; viz. that by Shikarpoor, by Ghuznee and Cabul, and the barren

routes across the Suleiman range to Dera Ghazee Khan and Dera Ishmail Khan. It is situated in the most fertile part of Affghanistan, where wheat, corn, barley, and other grains are procurable in tolerable abundance.* There would consequently be no difficulty in providing here for the subsistence of a permanent garrison, more especially if we were able to control in some degree the surrounding country. No enemy could afford to despise and pass by a formidable fortress and garrison, if it was here established, for in case of a defeat, or of being obliged to retreat, his army would be in a serious fix. From Candahar, moreover, Herat would always be within reach of a British force. The distance between these two points by the nearest and most direct route is the same within a mile as that from Balkh to Herat.

In conclusion, the position at present would seem to be this:—Until the Russian railways now in progress are completed, and until the difficulties that still impede in some places the navigation of the Syr-Daria are overcome, it can hardly be maintained, by the most rabid Russophobist, that Russia has the power to do us much actual harm in Central Asia. For the next five or six years, then, England has still the game in her own hands, and has ample time to mature and carry out the measures that may be determined on as best calculated to prevent, as far as she can, the possibility of Russia making use of her position in Central Asia, so as to cripple England's resources in Europe, or to threaten her supremacy in India. At the end of the above period, if the British frontier-line remains *in statu quo*, one may reasonably venture to prophesy that the tables will in great measure be turned, and Russia will certainly have the power (it does not necessarily follow that she will have the wish or intention) of

* See Appendix to Lady Sheil's 'Life in Persia.'

causing the most serious embarrassment to England, and be able to increase enormously our difficulties in the government of India, should it suit her purpose to do so. If action be taken in time, her power of doing this may be greatly modified, though it is absurd to suppose that it can ever be actually annulled. There is, however, but little chance of any such decisive action being taken, as it would entail an additional burden on the Indian exchequer; and as, in addition to the many risks that it would entail, it seems to be a peculiarity of English policy all over the world to prefer the most lavish prospective outlay to a present moderate disbursement. One thing, however, is clear. To subsidise an Affghan prince may be the cheapest and most politic expedient for a time, but sooner or later (probably within the next five or six years) an onward movement will be found to be the only course that is possible, having regard to the future security of our Indian empire, to pursue. It is as well, therefore, to look the necessity of such a measure fairly in the face, to choose our ground, and to make every effort to strengthen, as far as possible, our future position while we can.

CHAPTER IX.

POLITICAL ASPECT OF THE QUESTION.

It is perhaps only repeating an obvious truism to remark that the Russo-Indian, or Central Asian, question, as it is variously termed, embraces matters far wider in their scope and significance than any mere arrangement between the English Government in India and the ruler of Affghanistan. When it is borne in mind how intimately its future aspect will be connected with the solution of that inexhaustible problem for politicians, which is called the Eastern Question, it will be seen at once how closely this whole subject is bound up with the future peace of Europe. The question, therefore, is one of European, and not merely of Asiatic, interest. The optimist school of politicians, who see nothing but good in the future proximity of the Russian boundary to India, do not deny (for indeed they could scarcely do that in the face of so many historical facts testifying to the contrary) that the Asiatic interests and policy of Russia have always, from the commencement of the present century, been opposed to those of England. They appear, however, to base their anticipations of future benefits from this proximity upon what is alleged to be the modified and enlightened character of Russian policy since the accession to the throne of the reigning Czar, and are wont to declare that the influence of public opinion, and also of civilisation, which has undeniably been making such rapid strides in Russia of late years, cannot fail to modify her aggressive

spirit and her traditional ideas of her 'manifest destiny.' In their opinion, therefore, any dread of harm to English interests from Russia's proximity to India is an illusion of bygone days, which all sensible men should now for ever discard. They declare that there need be no fear that Russia will, within the next generation at any rate, attempt to fetter or control the future policy of England on any great European question by taking advantage of her position in Turkestan, nor that she will avail herself of it as a means whereby to further the solution of the question on the Bosphorus in a manner favourable to her own interests. The pacific tendencies of the reigning Czar are also adduced in support of these views, and stress has been laid upon the fact, as announced in Parliament a short time ago by Mr. Gladstone, that communications of a most frank, friendly, and cordial character on the subject of Central Asia were in progress between the English and Russian Governments. These disciples of optimism number so many able men among their ranks that their opinions are entitled to respect. It is, therefore, all the more desirable to consider whether these sanguine anticipations are based on good grounds, and whether the political signs of the times afford any reasonable hope that they will be fulfilled. When the optimists assert their belief in such opinions as the foregoing, what is it that we are asked to believe? Are we not, in effect, asked to believe that the whole tone and tendency of Russia's traditional policy, which has so long been steadily and persistently pursued by some of the ablest and most astute statesmen in Europe, is all at once to change, and that her cabinet will suddenly and most unaccountably desist from the prosecution of her most cherished schemes, and that too at the very time when she is likely to find herself in a more favourable position for carrying them into effect than she has ever been before?

Russia, like any other great Power, is generally believed to have many projects in contemplation, but the possession of Constantinople may be said to be the keystone of them all. Compared with this, all other schemes are to her cabinet as nought, and there is probably scarcely any sacrifice that she would not make to compass the fulfilment of so cherished an aim. It has long been foreseen that when Russia has once got command of the Dardanelles, the influence and power that she will be able to exert over the political and commercial destinies of Europe and Asia will be so overwhelming as to disturb the whole balance of European power. The moral effect, moreover, that her presence at Constantinople would exercise on the whole of Mahomedan Asia, is a consideration which England can by no means afford to despise or overlook. It needs no very intimate acquaintance with European politics to know that it has on this account been always the interest and policy of the other four great Powers of Europe, more especially of England and of France, to thwart and delay the accomplishment of this scheme by every means at their command, and to stave off as long as possible from the Turkish Empire the dismemberment and collapse which have so long threatened it with destruction. It is constantly asserted nowadays that the spirit of the whole Russian people is changing, that the Russia of the future will not be the old Russia that we have hitherto known, and that to talk of her as if she was not in a state of transition is but a loss of time. Doubtless, if all accounts are true, social changes, education, and many other influences are busy at work, civilising and enlightening the whole mass of the Russian people, and it is probable that future historians will date a new era of progress from the accession to the throne of the present Emperor. Some of the higher classes in Russia are even now as well educated and as enlightened

as those of any country in Europe. These, however, bear a very small proportion indeed to the whole mass of her people. Any real progress in their enlightenment and education must necessarily, like all great changes, be very gradual, and it seems somewhat too sanguine to suppose that for the next generation or two anything more than a very thin veneer of civilisation will be spread over the surface of Russian barbarism, or that the people as a whole will be able, or will wish, to exercise any influence over the policy of the Government, to which they have always been so indifferent. There is another point, moreover, which those who count upon the altered policy of this regenerated Russia of the future appear to lose sight of. In England, in the United States, or in any other free country, the acts and policy of the Government are generally guided by the voice and the wishes of the people as expressed by their own chosen representatives. This, certainly, has never been the case as yet in Russia. Is it likely to be so in the future?—and if so, are the optimists justified in anticipating that the tone of future Russian policy will be less aggressive, and more favourably disposed to England, than heretofore?

The policy of the Russian cabinet has hitherto been the policy of its Czar for the time, guided by a few of his leading statesmen. As for public opinion, it could scarcely said, be before the death of Nicholas, to exert any influence at all. Those who have lived much in Russia, and mingled in the society of its higher classes, tell us much of a strong National party, which is rising every year into greater importance, and which is likely more and more to exercise great influence over the councils and policy of the State.

Is it not natural to suppose that this party, if true to its instincts and name, will wish to seek the aggrandisement of Russia by every means in its power? A paper entitled the 'Golos' is known to be its organ, and if

one may judge from the tone of some of its articles on the subject of Central Asia, translations of which are from time to time published in the English journals, the opinions therein expressed are often by no means over-friendly, or too peaceably disposed towards England. Without enquiring too minutely into this subject, the discussion of which would require an intimate acquaintance with public opinion in Russia, it may be safely asserted that there are as yet no signs that the policy of the Russian cabinet with respect to European and Asiatic affairs is likely to change, or that her statesmen intend to swerve one inch from the path they have hitherto pursued. It may fairly be asked if there is anything in the attitude maintained by Russia towards Turkey to this day that can warrant the supposition that she will abandon her long-sustained policy of weakening and dismembering the Turkish Empire by every means in her power? Is not that attitude one of constant watchfulness and stern determination to take advantage of every incident that can possibly be made to further her ends? Does she ever lose an opportunity of sowing discord and disaffection among the heterogeneous subjects of the Porte, or of encouraging directly and indirectly, both with money and arms, any of them who wish to throw off their allegiance to their Government?

If, then, there is a chance that the opposition of England, who more than any other Power is interested in thwarting Russian designs upon Turkey, can be checkmated or neutralised by making use of the position in Turkestan a few years hence, so as to menace and threaten the Indian frontier, is it reasonable to suppose that the cabinet of St. Petersburg will neglect to avail itself of such an advantage, and, in order to be rid of its chief opponent, will fail to play the best card in its hand? It is evident, moreover, that the nearer she can advance her frontier to India, and the more

she can improve her communications between her Central Asiatic provinces and the civilised heart of her empire, the more effectually will she be able to carry this manœuvre into effect.

That Russian politicians have been for some time past keenly alive to this view of the question, is plain from the comments that from time to time appear in the Russian press. To illustrate their tone, one or two extracts will suffice. In some sketches of Russian conquests in Asia (translated from the Kolokol), which appeared in the 'Times' of November 16, 1868, there occurs the following passage :—'Quite recently, Russian opinion has been very much engrossed with the progress of the Imperial arms in Turkestan, regarding it as a means of exercising a pressure upon English policy on the Bosphorus. As will appear from the context, the Russian Government too has lately begun to assume that there is a possibility of making their Asiatic and European proceedings work together.' More recently also, viz. in April last, an article in the 'Moscow Gazette,' after discussing the interview between Lord Mayo and Shere Ali, concludes with saying :—'We cannot but repeat the opinion expressed by us on a former occasion, that, in the event of a European war, Turkestan will be a formidable basis of operations for us against the English.'* Again, with regard to the peaceful tendencies of the reigning Czar, upon which so much dependence is laid by some, it must be borne in mind that he is not immortal, and there is no security that after him there may not come a successor who shall revise the ambitious traditions of Nicholas, who is said to have often declared that 'Russia has no frontiers in Asia.'

* The Berlin correspondent of the 'Times,' after quoting the article from which this passage has been extracted, stated that the spirit manifested in it pervaded nearly all Russian utterances on the subject.

It is understood that negotiations are in progress between the English and Russian Governments, which have been initiated by the former, with a view of coming to an understanding with the latter upon Central Asian matters. Without presuming to question the wisdom and expediency of this measure, it may be remarked that those must be sanguine politicians who can persuade themselves that any real solution of the Russo-Indian question will be come to by such a step. Russia is not likely to fetter her future action by binding herself not to advance beyond a certain point in Central Asia; and even were any formal agreement made, it would of course, on the first outbreak of war between the two Powers, become mere waste-paper. Professions of mutual esteem and confidence cost nothing, and will doubtless be exchanged freely between the two cabinets. At any rate, of one thing we may be sure—that declarations of the entire absence of any designs that could in any way be prejudicial to England and her interests will, if necessary, be forthcoming in abundance from the cabinet of St. Petersburg. It might, however, be thought that the experience of some thirty years ago would have sufficed to show for ever the worth of Russian professions and assurances as to the tendencies and aims of her Central Asian policy. When called upon by the British Government to answer for the acts of her representatives in Persia during the years immediately preceding the first expedition into Affghanistan, which were proved on the clearest evidence to have been uniformly hostile to England, Russia was ultimately reduced to disavowing their proceedings, and to repudiating their acts; but in reality, 'so far as the whole influence of her name, aided by a considerable expenditure of money, by the active military assistance of her officers, by liberal promises of support, and by formal engagements, could be employed to excite all the nations

and tribes which occupy the country intervening between her frontier and ours to combine in opposing the views and interests of England, and ultimately to contemplate an attack on the British empire in India, that influence and those means were as effectually wielded by her agents as if she had been prepared to adopt their acts as her own, and to avow instead of repudiating them.' *

There are some politicians who seem to anticipate that the time will soon come when England and Russia may have a co-operative policy in Central Asia, both in political and commercial affairs, and who prophesy, in fact, that the time is not far distant when the lion and the bear shall lie down there together, and shall dwell at peace for ever. Doubtless, were the fulfilment of such a dream possible or probable, both statesmen and philanthropists would be justified in contemplating with pleasure the moral and physical benefits likely to accrue from this co-operation to the peoples of Central Asia, who have so long been steeped in the deepest barbarism. They might call upon all to rejoice that England, the foremost pioneer of civilisation in the world, was about to join hand in hand in the cause of humanity and progress with a country like Russia, which has to all appearance so grand a future before it, which is fated to exercise in the coming century so enormous an influence, either for good or for bad, over the destinies of the world, and to rule with absolute sway so many millions of men. Practical statesmen, however, will not seek to disguise from themselves the fact that, as there never has

* See 'Quarterly Review' for 1839, vol. lxiv. p. 186, art. 'Russia, Persia, and England.' This article, written obviously to defend the policy of the English Government of the day, in having undertaken the expedition into Affghanistan, contains a most complete *exposé* of the intrigues of the Russian cabinet in Central Asia during the years immediately preceding the Affghan war, and also of its dishonesty in disavowing the authorised acts of its representatives.

been, so in all human probability there never can be, much identity of interest between Russia and England in Central Asia, so long as the former wants, and means eventually to have, Constantinople, and the latter is determined to delay and prevent her gaining possession of it by every means at her command. The fact, moreover, of the commercial as well as the political interests of the two Powers, being at present so opposed, must for a long time serve to keep up a feeling of jealous rivalry.' *

It is evident that some of the organs of the Russian press do not put much faith in the negotiations said to be now in progress between the two Governments; and, indeed, one of its leading organs maintains that any political agreement in the matter is out of the question. Thus an article in the 'Moscow Gazette,' published during April last, in discussing the exchange of opinions between the English and Russian Governments on the state of Central Asia, has the following remarks :—†

'We have watched the English press since it first began to speak of the necessity of effecting some arrangement between Russia and England touching Central Asia. Among the expedients proposed by the English papers there was one suggesting that Affghanistan should be converted into a

* The question of English and Indian trade with the countries of Central Asia, as affected by the Russo-Indian question, has not been entered upon in this volume, as the author has had few opportunities for gaining much knowledge on the subject. This whole question is considered by many able men, who have a thorough acquaintance with it, to be most important, while others maintain that the trade of Central Asia is a 'Will o' the wisp,' that may well be left to itself, as it is not worth taking very much trouble about. I must refer any of my readers who would care to know the opinions that have been most recently mooted on the subject to a lately published number of the 'Journal of the Society of Arts,' No. 864, dated June 11, 1869.

† See letter of Berlin correspondent of the 'Times,' dated April 22, 1869.

neutral State, on the Belgian pattern, and the adjoining khanates be included in the privileges of European national law. But we cannot bring ourselves to believe that English politicians should have really hit upon the device of making us engage not to extend our frontiers beyond a certain point, or not to do such and such things in our relations with the khanates. There is too much political good sense in England to make them adopt a basis of negotiation *which could not produce any practical results.* Our suppositions in regard to this are strengthened by the circumstance that England has hastened to secure, without foreign concurrence, the neutrality of Affghanistan, or rather the goodwill of the Affghans, for herself. After a long interval, in which England contented herself with the part of a vigilant observer, she has recently paid subsidies to Shere Ali, and recognised him as a legitimate ruler of Affghanistan. Quite recently this newly-made potentate has been received with much theatrical display by the Governor-General of India, and, it is rumoured, been promised an annual salary of 120,000*l.* Thus England is endeavouring to place herself on good terms with the Ameer of Affghanistan, and if Russia is obliged to let her do as she pleases, England in turn must be content with our treating the Ameer of Bokhara as we please. *A political agreement being, then, entirely out of the question*, the negotiations alluded to by Mr. Gladstone can have reference only to commercial interests. Our commercial stake in Central Asia is quite as important to us as our political; and if Mr. Gladstone is right in expressing himself with so much complacency upon the attitude assumed by our Government in their confidential palavers with him, it is but too probable that what he regards as satisfactory will not be equally so to our mercantile community. As to the wish of the English papers to see English consuls installed in Turkestan, and Russian consuls in India, we cannot ourselves see the good

it would do. We have no direct commerce with India. There are neither Russian factories nor Russian subjects to be found in that country. Why, then, should we burden our budget with the salaries of superfluous representatives? And why, indeed, should England wish to station a consul at Tashkend? Would not his only occupation consist in watching the action of our Government, and is he, perhaps, to intrigue with the natives and to arm them against us?'

But putting aside, for the moment, all idea of any political agreement, it may be asked, what is the view that sensible and practical men are likely to take of the Russo-Indian question? If all the principal facts bearing upon it are taken into consideration, it can scarcely be disputed that though there is certainly no cause for immediate alarm, Russia, as the rival of England in Asia, must year by year weigh more and more heavily upon India, and that in the course of a few years more she cannot fail to hold such a position as will enable her to become, if she pleases, a source of the most serious embarrassment to England. Any actual invasion of India can hardly (as already remarked) for many and many a year be deemed a probable contingency, and Russian statesmen, notwithstanding all that has been alleged by alarmists upon the subject, have probably never, since the beginning of the present century, seriously contemplated the prosecution of so difficult and very doubtful an enterprise. Russia will, however, be able to serve her own ends, and to increase enormously our difficulties in the government of the country by measures which will fall far short of any such desperate step, and which will entail upon her scarcely any risk at all. Anyone who has lived for any length of time in North-Western India requires no very deep acquaintance with the native character, or with the sentiments of the people, to know that our rule is not loved there, and there are assuredly many turbulent spirits among the

border tribes who would gladly hail any opportunity of throwing off their allegiance to English rule. All over Asia the coming collision between the two rival Powers is eagerly anticipated and discussed. The Oriental mind, instinctively connecting aggression with power, naturally regards the advances of Russia as a sign of strength, and does not, it is to be feared, appreciate or understand the calm confident position taken up by England, who is anxious to remain within her own borders and to consolidate her power in the empire she has acquired. The credulity, moreover, with which Asiatics, high and low, are always ready to swallow the most improbable tales regarding Russia, and her power and resources (of which in reality they know nothing), will render her proximity to the Indian frontier, and the maintenance by her of a threatening attitude there, doubly dangerous, and will fan into a steady flame those sparks of disaffection which are ever smouldering in the minds of native politicians. It is therefore obvious that if we do not take every opportunity of strengthening our position while we may, we shall run the risk of becoming dependent on the forbearance of Russia for the tranquillity, and perhaps even for the security, of India; and that when such is the case, in any discussion in which our interests might chance to be opposed, or in which our opinions happen to be at variance, England will be forced to purchase that forbearance by a certain sacrifice either of interest or of opinion; and that to permit Russia to occupy such a position must have an injurious effect on our policy all over the world.*

It is certain that no efforts of England can now prevent the close proximity of the two frontier-lines; even granting that anything to prevent it might have been effected some

* See 'Quarterly Review' for 1839, vol. lxiv. p. 183, art. 'Russia, Persia, and England.'

years ago, the day is now gone by for any measures of the kind. As Russia's frontier, moreover, will probably in the natural course of events be a few years hence much nearer than it is now, and will continue so permanently, it remains to see how far the dangers arising from her neighbourhood may be modified and guarded against. The Indian Government, without being unnecessarily alarmed, has evidently long foreseen that the most obvious method of doing this is to adopt all the political and strategical measures in its power, both in order to stave off the danger as long as possible, and also, by husbanding the resources of the State, to be able to meet the crisis, if it ever does come, without flinching or misgiving. Foremost among the most obviously expedient political measures is the strengthening as far as possible of English influence in the countries that still intervene between the Indian and Russian frontiers, viz. Affghanistan, Persia, and Eastern Turkestan. But as regards the latter two countries, it has not been possible to effect much. In Affghanistan, the Government has wisely done its best to forestall the Russians by at length openly according its support to Shere Ali—a piece of diplomacy which both the neighbourhood of his dominions to India, his late urgent necessities, and the natural preference of the Barukzye princes for an English rather than a Russian alliance, have rendered it easy to effect. As to Persia, it is often lamented by many that the influence of England has long been on the decline, and that that of Russia predominates in the councils of the Shah. Various reasons are assigned for this, but the explanation is simple enough. If the relative geographical positions of England and Russia towards Persia be taken into account, it can scarcely be hoped, in the nature of things, that it will ever be otherwise at the Persian court. In Asia, with governments as with individuals, there is very little respect without fear; and

the fact that the army of the Caucasus is within easy call of the Russian ambassador, and that the frontiers of the two countries are so close together, must necessarily give a great preponderance to the influence of Russia over that of England. In Eastern Turkestan the late disturbed state of the country would have rendered it quite impossible to enter into any treaty obligations with its *de facto* rulers, even if the Government had ever attempted such a measure. Yakoob Beg has, it is believed, managed as yet to retain possession of his newly-acquired kingdom, but how long he will continue to be the *de facto* ruler it is quite impossible to foretell. Should he be overthrown or driven out of the country, Eastern Turkestan would probably relapse into utter anarchy, and this might be deemed a favourable opportunity by the Russians for bringing the whole country under their rule. There is another, but much less probable contingency, viz. that the Chinese Government might seek to regain possession of its lost territories, if a suitable opportunity presented itself of doing so. With respect to strategical measures, it is understood that no advance beyond the present north-western frontier is as yet deemed necessary by the Government. But looking upon the present boundary as the one to be permanently maintained, many judicious measures have been, and are being, carried out, calculated to strengthen it and render it capable of defence. The more prominent of these have, however, been noticed in a former chapter.

There is another measure (over the carrying out of which, however, the Indian Government has no control) which, both politically and strategically, is of great importance as bearing upon this question. I refer to the Euphrates Valley railway. In spite of the lifelong and persevering efforts of Major-General Chesney and others to promote this great undertaking, and notwithstanding that the whole of

the proposed route has been thoroughly surveyed, and that its great political, strategical, and commercial advantages to England, and also to the Turkish Government, are universally owned, it seems to outside observers that the commencement of this great project is as far off now as when it was first mooted nearly forty years ago. In 1858 it seemed as if something would really be done, but the scheme is still in abeyance, and seems likely to remain so. The increased speed that the adoption of this route would give to England's communications with India for the transport of mails, troops, and munitions of war, may be judged of from the fact, that it would be shorter than the present route *viâ* Egypt by about 1,400 miles. It would, moreover, possess the advantage of being an alternative route to India upon which we might fall back, in case the Suez route should, in consequence of some European complication, be temporarily closed against us.

Strategically, however, there is no doubt that line would have one great defect, from which the present Suez route will always, so long as England retains her naval supremacy, be free. In case of England being at war with Russia, the chances are greatly in favour of Turkey being found on the side of the former Power. In such a case, as the projected line is to run almost wholly through Turkish territory, Russia's first step would certainly be to try and cut in two England's main artery of communication with India. Nor would this be at all an impossible task. Her Trans-Caucasian frontier is not more than about 300 miles from the Euphrates, along the right or southern bank of which it is proposed that the line should run. With reference to this proximity may be quoted the words of Mr. Gifford Palgrave, in an article on the tribes of the NE. Turkish frontier, which appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine' of November 1868.

'Anxiety is sometimes felt at the news of Russian con-

quests in Central Asia, and the security of our Indian possessions is by some thought to be jeoparded by the appearance of the two-headed eagle in Bokhara or Samarcand. But, in truth, the Russian flag over Alexandropol, within a day's ride of Kars, is much nearer India. Let the line of country, the comparatively narrow line, of which we have been now speaking, from Batoum and the Ajaras on the Black Sea down to Bayazeed and Van, once become Russian territory, and the entire Tigro-Euphrates valley, now separated from Russia and from Russia's obsequious ally, Persia, by Kurdistan alone, becomes Russian also. The Persian Gulf and the directest of all Indian routes, a route where no wide desert tracts, no huge mountain-chains intervene, nothing but the serviceable sea, will thus be not only open to, but absolutely in the hands of, our very doubtful friends. The exclusion of all commerce, all communication, by this most important line, except what is Russian and through Russia, will be the first and immediate consequence: what may be the ulterior results time alone can tell. But if India have a vulnerable point, next after Egypt, it is the Euphrates valley and its communications.'

But with reference to the anticipations expressed in this extract, the other side of the case may be taken, and it may be urged, that if there is even a remote chance of the Tigro-Euphrates valley ever coming into Russian occupation, there is all the more reason that England should strengthen the hands of the Porte by overbearing all opposition, and taking in hand at once the construction of the line.

It may naturally be asked, What is the reason that so important and advantageous a scheme still hangs fire? It may fairly be replied: Because two of the great Powers of Europe, viz. France and Russia, as well as Egypt, are from

the strongest motives of self-interest opposed to it. Firstly' as to France. Her influence has long been predominant in Egypt, and the interests of the Suez Canal, which originally was entirely a French project, would of course suffer by the adoption of a quicker and rival route, as it would naturally divert much of the trade and traffic which now, it is hoped, will go far to repay the cost of the undertaking. France, moreover, is naturally not over anxious to see England's influence in Asia Minor and all over the East so enormously increased as it would be by the construction under English auspices of this line, nor does she wish that England should be perfectly independent of Egypt, in whose councils she herself has, or is supposed to have, at present so much influence.

Russia, for the most obvious reasons, both political and commercial, will always do her best to thwart the undertaking. In the first place, the line would greatly strengthen and give importance to Turkey—a consummation which she by no means desires. Secondly, in the event of Turkey being allied with any European Power against Russia, the railway would afford great facilities for that ally to throw a strong force into Kurdistan from the Mediterranean, and so threaten or invade Russia's Trans-Caucasian frontier, where hitherto she has always considered herself secure from attack. If England were allied with Turkey against Russia, not only would the latter's southern frontier be thus assailable by the disembarkation of a force from the Mediterranean, but also from Bombay, as an army could be despatched thence to the head of the Persian Gulf near Bussorah, and be conveyed by the railway into the heart of Asia Minor. To the commercial interests of Russia, moreover, the construction of the line would be detrimental in the highest degree. At present the markets of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor generally, are supplied,

chiefly through Russia from Trebizonde. As soon, however, as the Euphrates line is completed, Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham will send their products direct by sea to Syria, and thence find an easy transit for them all through Asia Minor, and even as far as Southern Persia.

Egypt, for equally obvious reasons, has always been opposed to the scheme. For what is it that gives her her status and importance in the eyes of Europe? Is it not that the railway across the Isthmus and the Suez Canal give her command of the highway to Asia? She has necessarily, from her position, great influence with the Porte, and if rumour says true, it has ever been exercised to the utmost to prevent the construction of the line.

The Porte, on the other hand, has long professed to be fully alive to the great advantages that would accrue to the Turkish Empire from its construction, and is always *ostensibly* ready to do everything to further the project. But long experience has shown that Turkey is no exception to other Oriental States. It is to be feared that there are not to be found among her leading statesmen any who would be entirely proof against corrupt influences,* or who would be patriotic enough to insist in the teeth of all opposition upon the construction of the line. So long as this is the case, the old routine of Oriental diplomacy will be followed, i.e. everything will be promised by the Government collectively, while individuals composing that Government will take very good care that nothing is done. If, however, England should ever succeed in overbearing all opposition, and insist upon the execution of the project, it would indeed be a great point gained.

But when all this has been said and done—when all the

* With reference to this very subject, see Sir C. W. Dilke's 'Greater Britain,' vol. ii. pp. 304–5, in which the author quotes an Egyptian Pacha as saying to him, 'We have all the leading men of Turkey in our pay.'

measures that political foresight may deem necessary, and that strategical skill and local knowledge may reasonably suggest, have been adopted and carried into execution, with a view to modify the danger that is likely to threaten English supremacy and interests in India from the close neighbourhood of a rival European Power—yet it would be somewhat too sanguine to suppose that it can ever be entirely averted, or that the Russo-Indian question will ever cease to exist. On the contrary, as years roll on, and as Russia is enabled to consolidate her power by opening out quick and improved communications with the as yet isolated provinces she has just acquired in Turkestan, the importance of the question must ever assume larger proportions, and the proximity of Russia to India must (at any rate until the dawning of that peaceful era, the advent of which is foretold by the optimists) ever be one of the most awkward complications with which English statesmen will have to deal. During years of peace, and so long as any designs and projects she may have in other parts of Europe or Asia are not thwarted or interfered with by England, Russia will probably in no way busy herself with India and its concerns. But whenever any question of European diplomacy arises in which the interests of the two countries are directly opposed, or are likely to clash, her power to stir up mischief or to threaten our actual or political frontier will have to be taken into account, because the difficulty which has so long been looming in the future will soon have to be regarded as ever-present and permanent. The fact is an unpalatable one, but it is useless to disguise it. There is but small reason to join in the cry that is often raised by some foreboders of ill, who seem to delight in prophesying the speedy downfall of England, owing to the deep-laid machinations of her foes. The truth is, that she can well afford to look this danger in the face, and having taken all necessary precautions, she need

not lose sight of the fact that even in the present age of civilisation the *ultima ratio* of sovereign States is war, nor need she run the risk of sacrificing any of her interests to a hollow confidence in the permanently peaceful intentions of a rival and ambitious Power.

Bearing rather in mind the old saying (as applicable to States now as the first day it was spoken), *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, England may contemplate with calm confidence the future aspect of this important question, and provide against its possible dangers; knowing full well that if ever the time does come, as come it some day may, when the contest for supremacy has to be fought out, she may trust without misgiving to that moral ascendancy which, in spite of all her shortcomings, she has a right to think she has earned in Asia; to a strong strategical position, to her husbanded resources, and, above all, to her fine army in India, and to the soldiers that have never yet failed her in the hour of need.

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